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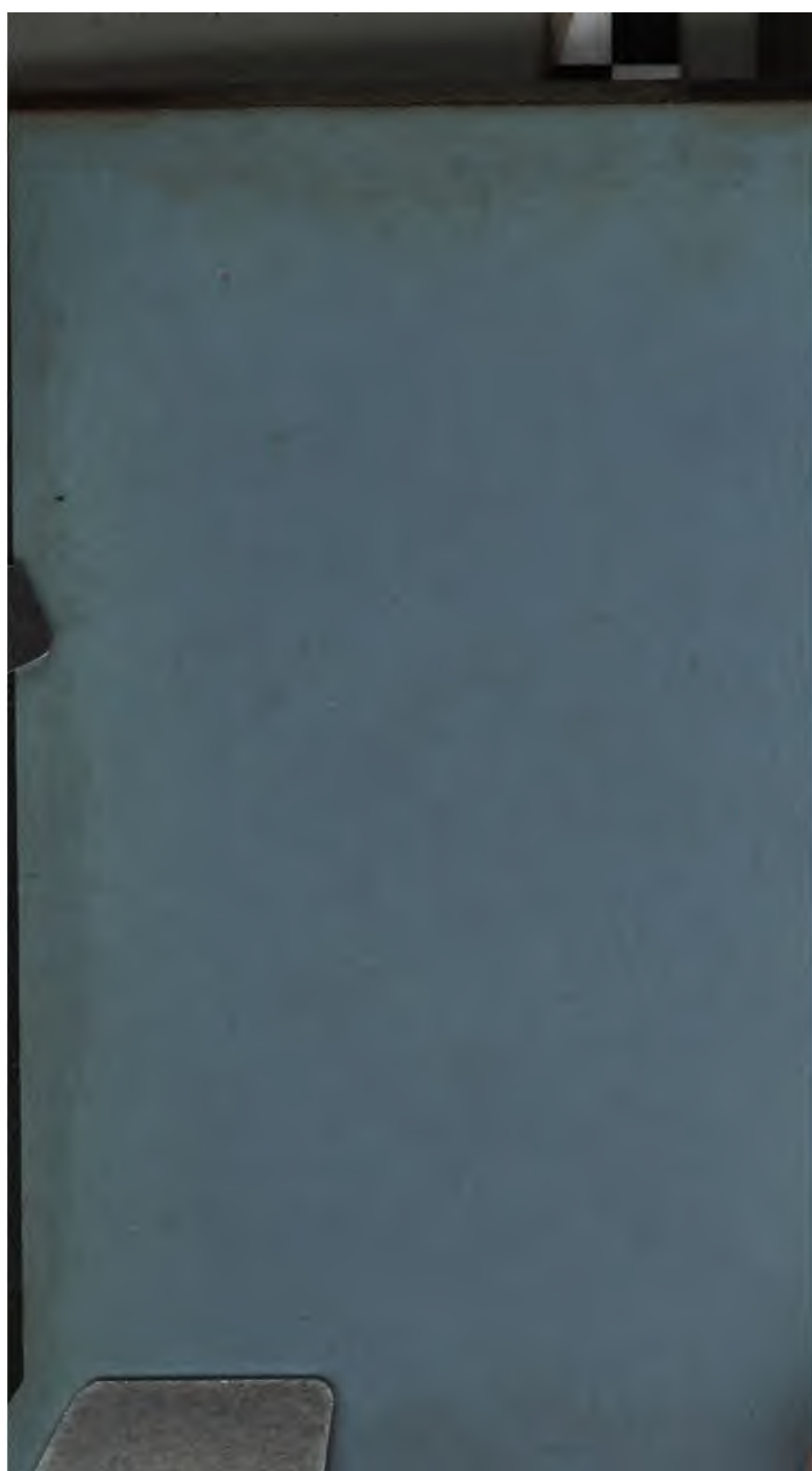
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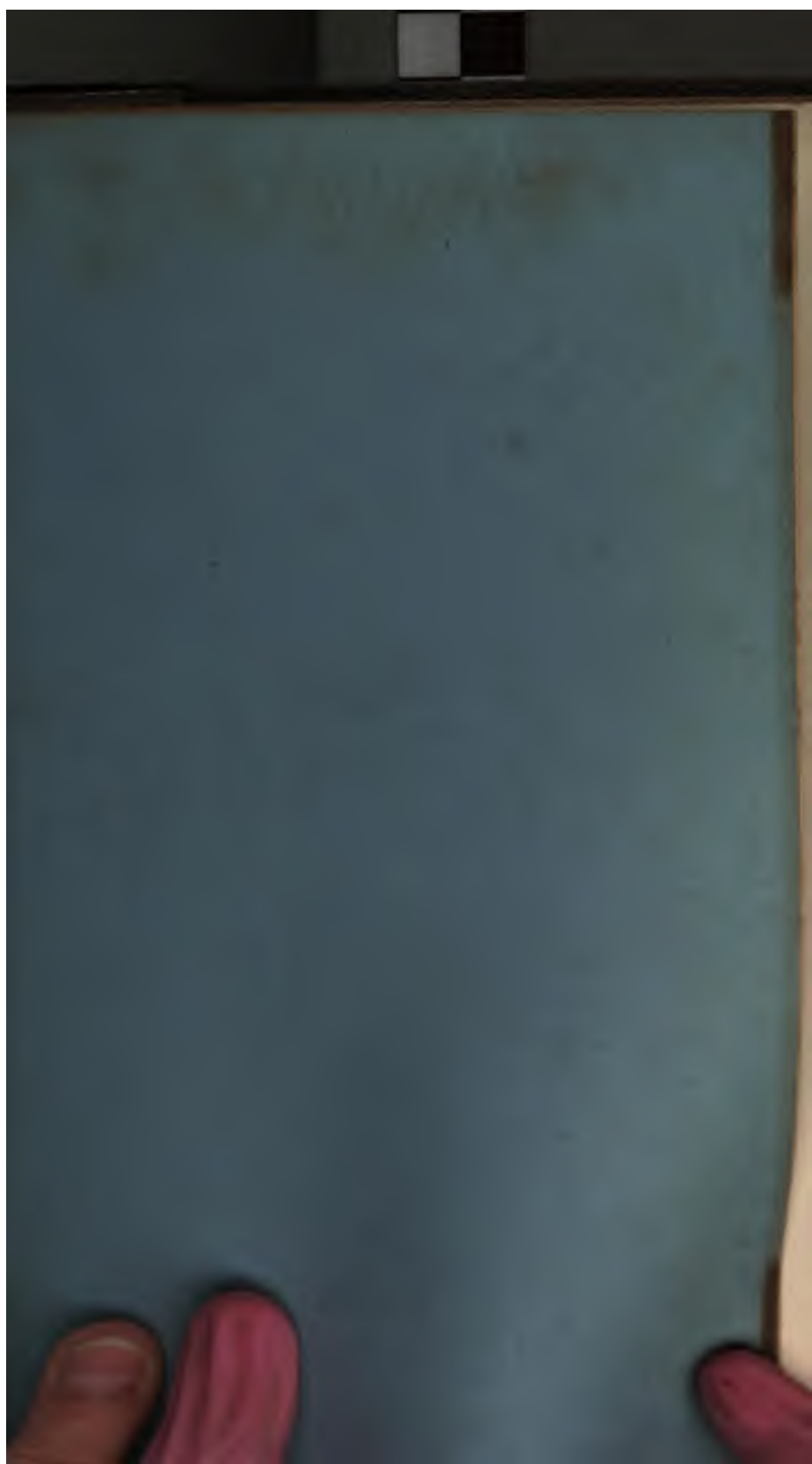
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M. E. Edwards del.

L. Evans sc.

MRS. HALLIDAY IS REPROACHED. p. 26.





BELGRAVIA

A LONDON MAGAZINE

CONDUCTED BY

M. E. BRADDON

AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," "AURORA FLOYD," ETC. ETC.

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BELGRAVIA

NOVEMBER 1866

BIRDS OF PREY

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c

Book the First

FATAL FRIENDSHIP

CHAPTER I. THE HOUSE IN BLOOMSBURY

THERE are some houses whereof the outward aspect is sealed with the seal of respectability—houses which inspire confidence in the minds of the most sceptical of butchers and bakers—houses at whose area-gates the tradesman delivers his goods undoubtingly, and from whose spotless door-steps the vagabond children of the neighbourhood recoil as from a shrine too sacred for hop-sotch.

Such a house made its presence obvious, some years ago, in one of the smaller streets of that west-central region which lies between Holborn and St. Pancras Church. It is perhaps the nature of ultra-respectability to be disagreeably conspicuous. The unsullied brightness of No. 14 Fitzgeorge-street was a standing reproach to every other house in the dingy thoroughfare. That one spot of cleanliness made the surrounding dirt cruelly palpable. The muslin curtains in the parlour windows of No. 15 would not have appeared of such a smoky yellow if the curtains of No. 14 had not been of such a pharisaical whiteness. Mrs. Magson, at No. 13, was a humble letter of lodgings, always more or less in arrear with the demands of quarter-day; and it seemed a hard thing that her door-steps, whereon were expended much labour and hearthstone—not to mention house-flannel, which was in itself no unimportant item in the annual expenses—should be always thrown in the shade by the surpassing purity of the steps before No. 14.

Not satisfied with being the very pink and pattern of respectability, the objectionable house even aspired to a kind of prettiness. It was as bright, and pleasant, and rural of aspect as any house within earshot of the *roar and rattle of Holborn* can be. There were flowers

in the windows; gaudy scarlet geraniums, which seemed to enjoy an immunity from all the ills to which geraniums are subject, so impossible was it to discover a faded leaf amongst their greenness, or the presence of blight amidst their wealth of blossom. There were bird-cages within the shadow of the muslin curtains, and the colouring of the newly-pointed brick-work was agreeably relieved by the vivid green of Venetian blinds. The freshly-varnished street-door bore a brass-plate, on which to look was to be dazzled; and the effect produced by this combination of white door-step, scarlet geranium, green blind, and brass-plate was obtrusively brilliant.

Those who had been so privileged as to behold the interior of the house in Fitzgeorge-street brought away with them an envious admiration of its inner splendours. The pink and pattern of propriety within, as it was the pink and pattern of propriety without, it excited in every breast alike a wondering awe, as of a habitation tenanted by some mysterious being, infinitely superior to the common order of householders.

The inscription on the brass-plate informed the neighbourhood that No. 14 was occupied by Mr. Sheldon, surgeon-dentist; and the dwellers in Fitzgeorge-street amused themselves in their leisure hours by speculative discussions upon the character and pursuits, belongings and surroundings of this gentleman.

Of course he was eminent'y respectable. On that question no Fitzgeorgian had ever hazarded a doubt. A householder with such a door-step and such muslin curtains could not be other than the most correct of mankind; for, if there is any external evidence by which a dissolute life or an ill-regulated mind will infallibly betray itself, that evidence is to be found in the yellowness and limpness of muslin window-curtains. The eyes are the windows of the soul, says the poet; but if a man's eyes are not open to your inspection, the windows of his house will help you to discover his character as an individual, and his solidity as a citizen. At least such was the opinion cherished in Fitzgeorge-street, Russell-square.

The person and habits of Mr. Sheldon were in perfect harmony with the aspect of the house. The unsullied snow of the door-step reproduced itself in the unsullied snow of his shirt-front; the brilliancy of the brass-plate was reflected in the glittering brightness of his gold studs; the varnish on the door was equalled by the lustrous surface of his black satin waistcoat; the careful pointing of the brick-work was in a manner imitated by the perfect order of his polished fingernails and the irreproachable neatness of his hair and whiskers.

No dentist or medical practitioner of any denomination had inhabited the house in Fitzgeorge-street before the coming of Philip Sheldon. The house had been unoccupied for upwards of a year, and was in the last stage of shabbiness and decay, when the bills disappeared all at once from the windows, and busy painters and bricklayers

set their ladders against the dingy brick-work. Mr. Sheldon took the house upon a long lease, and spent two or three hundred pounds in the embellishment of it. Upon the completion of all repairs and decorations, two great waggon-loads of furniture, distinguished by that old-fashioned clumsiness which is eminently suggestive of respectability, arrived from the Euston-square Terminus, while a young man of meditative aspect might have been seen on his knees, now in one empty chamber, anon in another, performing some species of indoor surveying, with a three-foot rule, a loose little oblong memorandum-book, and the merest stump of a square lead-pencil. This was an emissary from the carpet warehouse; and before nightfall it was known to more than one inhabitant of Fitzgeorge-street that the stranger was going to lay down new carpets. The new-comer was evidently of an active and energetic temperament, for within three days of his arrival the brass-plate on his street-door announced his profession, while a neat little glass-case, on a level with the eye of the passing pedestrian, exhibited specimens of his skill in mechanical dentistry, and afforded instruction and amusement to the boys of the neighbourhood, who criticised the glistening white teeth and impossibly red gums, displayed behind the plate-glass, with a like vigour and freedom of language. Nor did Mr. Sheldon's announcement of his profession confine itself to the brass-plate and the glass-case. A shabby-genteel young man pervaded the neighbourhood for some days after the surgeon-dentist's advent, knocking a postman's knock, which only wanted the galvanic sharpness of the professional touch to be the real thing, and delivering neatly-printed circulars to the effect that Mr. Sheldon, surgeon-dentist, of 14 Fitzgeorge-street, had invented some novel method of adjusting false teeth, incomparably superior to any existing method, and that he had, further, patented an improvement upon nature in the way of coral gums, the name whereof was an unpronounceable compound of Greek and Latin, calculated to awaken an awful reverence in the unprofessional and unclassical mind.

The Fitzgeorgians shook their heads with prophetic solemnity as they read these circulars. Struggling householders, who find it a hard task to keep the two ends which never have met and never will meet from growing farther and farther asunder every year, are apt to derive a dreary kind of satisfaction from the contemplation of another man's impending ruin. Fitzgeorge-street and its neighbourhood had existed without the services of a dentist, but it was very doubtful that a dentist would be able to exist on the custom to be obtained in Fitzgeorge-street. Mr. Sheldon may, perhaps, have pitched his tent under the impression that wherever there was mankind, there was likely to be toothache, and that the healer of an ill so common to frail humanity could scarcely fail to earn his bread, let him establish his abode of horror where he might. For some time after his arrival people watched him and wondered about him, and regarded him a little suspiciously,

in spite of the substantial clumsiness of his furniture and the unwinking brightness of his windows. His neighbours asked one another how long all that outward semblance of prosperity would last; and there was sinister meaning in the question.

The Fitzgeorgians were not a little surprised, and were perhaps just a little disappointed, on finding that the newly-established dentist did manage to hold his ground somehow or other, and that the muslin curtains were renewed again and again in all their spotless purity; that the supplies of rotten-stone and oil, hearth-stone and house-flannel were unfailing as a perennial spring; and that the unsullied snow of Mr. Sheldon's shirt-fronts retained its primeval whiteness. Wonder and suspicion gave place to a half-envious respect. Whether much custom came to the dentist no one could decide. There is no trade or profession in which the struggling man will not receive some faint show of encouragement. Pedestrians of agonised aspect, with handkerchiefs held convulsively before their mouths, were seen to rush wildly towards the dentist's door, then pause for a moment, stricken by a sudden terror, and anon feebly pull the handle of an inflexible bell. Cabs had been heard to approach that fatal door—generally on wet days; for there seems to be a kind of fitness in the choice of damp and dismal weather for the extraction of teeth. Elderly ladies and gentlemen had been known to come many times to the Fitzgeorgian mansion. There was a legend of an old lady who had been seen to arrive in a brougham, especially weird and nutcrackery of aspect, and to depart half-an-hour afterwards a beautified and renovated creature. One half of the Fitzgeorgians declared that Mr. Sheldon had established a very nice little practice, and was saving money; while the other half were still despondent, and opined that the dentist had private property, and was eating up his little capital. It transpired in course of time that Mr. Sheldon had left his native town of Little Barlingford, in Yorkshire, where his father and grandfather had been surgeon-dentists before him, to establish himself in London. He had disposed advantageously of an excellent practice, and had transferred his household goods—the ponderous chairs and tables, the wood whereof had deepened and mellowed in tint under the indefatigable hand of his grandmother—to the metropolis, speculating on the chance that his talents and appearance, address and industry, could scarcely fail to achieve a position. It was further known that he had a brother, an attorney in Gray's Inn, who visited him very frequently; that he had few other friends or acquaintance; that he was a shining example of steadiness and sobriety; that he was on the sunnier side of thirty, a bachelor, and very good-looking; and that his household was comprised of a grim-visaged active old woman imported from Barlingford, a girl who ran errands, and a boy who opened the door, attended to the consulting-room, and did some mysterious work at odd times with a file and sundry queer lumps of plaster-of-paris,

beeswax, and bone, in a dark little shed abutting on the yard at the back of the house. This much had the inhabitants of Fitzgeorge-street discovered respecting Mr. Sheldon when he had been amongst them four years; but they had discovered no more. He had made no local acquaintances, nor had he sought to make any. Those of his neighbours who had seen the interior of his house had entered it as patients. They left it as much pleased with Mr. Sheldon as one can be with a man at whose hands one has just undergone martyrdom, and circulated a very flattering report of the dentist's agreeable manners and delicate white handkerchief, fragrant with the odour of eau-de-cologne. For the rest, Philip Sheldon lived his own life, and dreamed his own dreams. His opposite neighbours, who watched him on sultry summer evenings as he lounged near an open window smoking his cigar, had no more knowledge of his thoughts and fancies than they would have had if he had been a Calmuck Tartar or an Abyssinian chief.

CHAPTER II.

PHILIP SHELDON READS THE "LANCET."

FITZGEORGE-STREET was chill and dreary of aspect, under a gray March sky, when Mr. Sheldon returned to it after a week's absence from London. He had been to Little Barlingford, and had spent his brief holiday among old friends and acquaintance. The weather had not been in favour of that driving hither and thither in dog-carts, or riding rakish horses long distances to beat up old companions, which is accounted pleasure on such occasions. The blustering winds of an unusually bitter March had buffeted Mr. Sheldon in the streets of his native town, and had almost blown him off the door-steps of his kindred. So it is scarcely strange if he returned to town looking none the better for his excursion. He looked considerably the worse for his week's absence, the old Yorkshire-woman said, as she waited upon him while he eat a chop and drank two large cups of very strong tea.

Mr. Sheldon made short work of this impromptu meal. He seemed anxious to put an end to his housekeeper's affectionate interest in himself and his health, and to get her out of the room. She had nursed him nearly thirty years before, and the recollection that she had been very familiar with him when he was a handsome black-eyed baby, with a tendency to become suddenly stiff of body and crimson of visage without any obvious provocation, inclined her to take occasional liberties now. She watched him furtively as he sat in a big high-backed arm-chair staring moodily at the struggling fire, and would fain have questioned him a little about Barlingford and Barlingford people.

But Philip Sheldon was not a man with whom even a superannuated nurse can venture to take many liberties. He was a good master, paid his servants *their wages with unfailing punctuality*, and gave very

little trouble. But he was the last person in the world upon whom a garrulous woman could venture to inflict her rambling discourse; as Nancy Woolper—by courtesy, Mrs. Woolper—was fain to confess to her next-door neighbour, Mrs. Magson, when her master was the subject of an afternoon gossip. The heads of a household may inhabit a neighbourhood for years without becoming acquainted even with the outward aspect of their neighbours; but in the lordly servants' halls of the West, or the modest kitchens of Bloomsbury, there will be interchange of civilities and friendly "droppings in" to tea or supper, let the master of the house be never so ungregarious a creature.

"You can take the tea-things, Nancy," Mr. Sheldon said presently, arousing himself suddenly from that sombre reverie in which he had been absorbed for the last ten minutes; "I am going to be very busy to-night, and I expect Mr. George in the course of the evening. Mind I am not at home to any body but him."

The old woman arranged the tea-things on her tray, but still kept a furtive watch on her master, who sat with his head a little bent, and his bright black eyes fixed on the fire, with that intensity of gaze peculiar to eyes which see something far away from the object they seem to contemplate. She was in the habit of watching Mr. Sheldon rather curiously at all times, for she had never quite got over a difficulty in realising the fact that the black-eyed baby with whom she had been so intimate *could* have developed into this self-contained inflexible young man, whose thoughts were so very far away from her. To-night she watched him more intently than she was accustomed to do, for to-night there was some change in his face which she was trying, in a dim way, to account for.

He looked up from the fire suddenly, and found her eyes fixed upon him. It may be that he had been disturbed by a semi-consciousness of that curious gaze, for he looked at her angrily—"What are you staring at, Nancy?"

It was not the first time he had encountered her watchful eyes and asked the same impatient question. But Mrs. Woolper possessed that north-country quickness of intellect which is generally equal to an emergency, and was always ready with some question or suggestion which went to prove that she had just fixed her eyes on her master, inspired by some anxiety about his interests.

"I was just a-thinking, sir," she said, meeting his stern glance unflinchingly with her little sharp gray eyes, "I was just a-thinking—you said not at home to *any one*, except Mr. George. If it should be a person in a cab wanting their teeth out sudden—and if any thing could make toothache more general in this neighbourhood it would be these March winds—if it should be a patient, sir, in a cab—"

The dentist interrupted her with a short bitter laugh.

"Neither March winds nor April showers are likely to bring me patients, Nancy, on foot or in cabs, and you ought to know it. If it's

a patient, ask him in, by all means, and give him last Saturday week's *Times* to read, while I get the rust off my forceps. There, that will do; take your tray—or, stop; I've got some news to tell you." He rose, and stood with his back to the fire and his eyes bent upon the hearth-rug, while Mrs. Woolper waited by the table, with the tray packed ready for removal. Her master kept her waiting so for some minutes, and then turned his face half away from her, and contemplated himself absently in the glass while he spoke.

"You remember Mrs. Halliday?" he asked.

"I should think I did, sir; Miss Georgina Cradock that was—Miss Georgy they called her; your first sweetheart. And how she could ever marry that big awkward Halliday, is more than I can make out. Poor fondy! I suppose she was took with those great round blue eyes and red whiskers of his."

"Her mother and father were 'took' by his comfortable farmhouse, and well-stocked farm, Nancy," answered Mr. Sheldon, still contemplating himself in the glass. "Georgy had very little to do with it. She is one of those women who let other people think for them. However, Tom is an excellent fellow, and Georgy was a lucky girl to catch such a husband. Any little flirtation there may have been between her and me was over and done with long before she married Tom. It never was more than a flirtation; and I've flirted with a good many Barlingford girls in my time, as you know, Nancy."

It was not often that Mr. Sheldon condescended to be so communicative to his housekeeper. The old woman nodded and chuckled, delighted by her master's unwonted friendliness.

"I drove over to Hyley while I was at home, Nancy," continued the dentist—he called Barlingford home still, though he had broken most of the links that had bound him to it,—“and dined with the Hallidays. Georgy is as pretty as ever, and she and Tom get on capitally.”

"Any children, sir?"

"One girl," answered Mr. Sheldon, carelessly. "She's at school in Scarborough, and I didn't see her. I had a very pleasant day with the Hallidays. Tom has sold his farm; that part of the world doesn't suit him, it seems; too cold and bleak for him. He's one of those big burly-looking men who seem as if they could knock you down with a little finger, and who shiver at every puff of wind. I don't think he'll make old bones, Nancy. But that's neither here nor there. I daresay he's good for another ten years; or I'm sure I hope so, on Georgy's account."

"It was right-down soft of him to sell Hyley Farm, though," said Nancy reflectively; "I've heard tell as it's the best land for forty mile round Barlingford. But he got a rare good price for it, I'll lay."

"O, yes; he sold the property uncommonly well, he tells me."

You know if a north-countryman gets the chance of making a profit, he never lets it slip through his fingers."

Mrs. Woolper received this compliment to her countrymen with a gratified grin, and Mr. Sheldon went on talking, still looking at the reflection of his handsome face in the glass, and pulling his whiskers meditatively.

"Now, as Tom was made for a farmer and nothing but a farmer, he must find land somewhere in a climate that does suit him; so his friends have advised him to try a place in Devonshire or Cornwall, where he may train his myrtles and roses over his roof, and grow green peas for the London markets as late as November. There are such places to be had if he bides his time, and he's coming to town next week to look about him. So as Georgy and he would be about as capable of taking care of themselves in London as a couple of children, I have recommended them to take up their quarters here. They'll have their lodgings for nothing, and we shall chum together, on the Yorkshire system; for of course I can't afford to keep a couple of visitors for a month at a stretch. Do you think you shall be able to manage for us, Nancy?"

"O, yes, I'll manage well enough. I'm not one of your lazy London lasses that take half an hour to wipe a tea-cup. I'll manage easy enough. Mr. and Mrs. Halliday will be having your room, I'll lay."

"Yes; give them the best room, by all means. I can sleep any where. And now go downstairs and think it over, Nancy. I must get to my work. I've some letters that must be written to-night."

Mrs. Woolper departed with her tray, gratified by her master's unwonted familiarity, and not ill-pleased by the thought of visitors. They would cause a great deal of trouble, certainly; but the monotony of Nancy's easy life had grown so oppressive to an active temperament as to render the idea of any variety delightful to her mind. And then there would be the pleasure of making that iniquitous creature the London lass bestir herself, and there would be furthermore the advantage of certain little perquisites which a clever manager always secures to herself in a house where there is much eating and drinking. Mr. Sheldon himself had lived like a modern anchorite for the last four years; and Nancy Woolper, who was pretty well acquainted with the state of his finances, had pinched and contrived for his benefit, or rather for the benefit of the black-eyed baby she had nursed nine-and-twenty years before. For his sake she had been careful and honest, willing to forego all the small profits to which she held herself entitled; but if well-to-do people were going to share her master's expenses, there would be no longer need for such scrupulous integrity; and if things were rightly managed, Thomas Halliday might be made to bear the entire cost of the household during his month's *visit on the Yorkshire system*.

While Mrs. Woolper meditated upon her domestic duties, the master of the domicile abandoned himself to reflections which were apparently of a very serious character. He brought a leathern desk from a side-table, unlocked it, and took out a quire of paper; but he made no further advance towards the writing of those letters on account of which he had dismissed his housekeeper. He sat, with his elbows on the table, nibbling the end of a wooden penholder, and staring at the opposite wall. His face looked pale and haggard in the light of the gas, and the eyes, fixed in that vacant stare, had a feverish brightness.

Mr. Sheldon was a handsome man—eminently handsome, according to the popular notion of masculine beauty; and if the popular ideal has been a little vulgarised by the waxen gentlemen on whose finely-moulded foreheads the wig-maker is wont to display the specimens of his art, that is no discredit to Mr. Sheldon. His features were regular; the nose a handsome aquiline; the mouth firm and well modelled; the chin and jaw rather heavier than in the waxen ideal of the hair-dresser; the forehead very prominent in the region of the perceptives, but obviously wanting in the higher faculties. The eye of the phrenologist, unaided by his fingers, must have failed to discover the secrets of Mr. Sheldon's organisation; for one of the dentist's strong points was his hair, which was very luxuriant, and which he wore in artfully-arranged masses that passed for curls, but which owed their undulating grace rather to a skilful manipulation than to any natural tendency. It has been said that the rulers of the world are straight-haired men; and Mr. Sheldon might have been a Napoleon III. so far as regards this special attribute. His hair was of a dense black, and his whiskers of the same sombre hue. These carefully-arranged whiskers were another of the dentist's strong points; and the third strong point was his teeth, the perfection whereof was a fine advertisement when considered in a professional light. The teeth were rather too large and square for a painter's or a poet's notion of beauty, and were a little apt to suggest an unpleasant image of some sleek brindled creature crunching human bones in an Indian jungle. But they were handsome teeth notwithstanding, and their flashing whiteness made an effective contrast to the clear sallow tint of the dentist's complexion.

Mr. Sheldon was a man of industrious habits,—fond indeed of work, and distinguished by a persistent activity in the carrying out of any labour he had planned for himself. He was not prone to the indulgence of idle reveries or agreeable day-dreams. Thought with him was labour; it was the "thinking out" of future work to be done, and it was an operation as precise and mathematical as the actual labour that resulted therefrom. The contents of his brain were as well kept as a careful trader's ledger. He had his thoughts docketed and indexed, and rarely wasted the smallest portion of his time in searching for an idea. To-night he sat thinking until he was interrupted by a loud double-knock, which *was* evidently familiar to him, for he muttered

"George!" pushed aside his desk, and took up his stand upon the hearthrug, ready to receive the expected visitor.

There was the sound of a man's voice below,—very like Philip Sheldon's own voice; then a quick firm tread on the stairs; and then the door was opened, and a man, who himself was very like Philip Sheldon, came into the room. This was the dentist's brother George, two years his junior. The likeness between the two men was in no way marvellous, but it was nevertheless very obvious. You could scarcely have mistaken one man for the other, but you could hardly have failed to perceive that the two men were brothers. They resembled each other more closely in form than in face. They were of the same height—both tall and strongly built; they had both black eyes with a hard brightness in them, black whiskers, black hair, sinewy hands with prominent knuckles, square finger-tops, and bony wrists. Each man seemed the personification of savage health and vigour, smoothed and shapened in accordance with the prejudices of civilised life. Looking at these two men for the first time, you might approve or disapprove their appearance; they might impress you favourably or unfavourably; but you could scarcely fail to be reminded vaguely of strong, bright-eyed, savage creatures, beautiful and graceful after their kind, but dangerous and fatal to man.

The brothers greeted each other with a friendly nod. They were a great deal too practical to indulge in any sentimental display of fraternal affection. They liked each other very well, and were useful to each other, and took their pleasure together on those rare occasions when they were weak enough to waste time upon unprofitable pleasure; but neither of them would have comprehended the possibility of any thing beyond this.

"Well, old fellow," said George, "I'm glad you're back again. You're looking rather seedy, though. I suppose you knocked about a good deal down there?"

"I had a night or two of it with Halliday and the old set. He's going it rather fast."

"Humph!" muttered Mr. Sheldon the younger; "it's a pity he doesn't go it a little faster, and go off the hooks altogether, so that you might marry Georgy."

"How do I know that Georgy would have me, if he *did* leave her a widow?" asked Philip dubiously.

"O, she'd have you fast enough. She used to be very sweet upon you before she married Tom; and even if she has forgotten all that, she'd have you if you asked her. She'd be afraid to say no. She was always more or less afraid of you, you know, Phil."

"I don't know about that. She was a nice little thing enough; but she knew how to drop a poor sweetheart and take up with a rich one, in spite of her simplicity."

"O, that was the old parties' doing. Georgy would have jumped

into a cauldron of boiling oil if her mother and father had told her she must do it. Don't you remember when we were children together how afraid she used to be of spoiling her frocks? I don't believe she married Tom Halliday of her own free will, any more than she stood in the corner of her own free will after she'd torn her frock, as I've seen her stand twenty times. She stood in the corner because they told her she must; and she married Tom for the same reason, and I don't suppose she's been particularly happy with him."

"Well, that's her look-out," answered Philip gloomily; "I know I want a rich wife badly enough. Things are about as bad with me as they can be."

"I suppose they *are* rather piscatorial. The elderly dowagers don't come up to time, eh? Very few orders for the complete set at ten-pound-ten?"

"I took about seventy pounds last year," said the dentist, "and my expenses are something like five pounds a week. I've been making up the deficiency out of the money I got for my business, thinking I should be able to stand out and make a connection; but the connection gets more disconnected every year. I suppose people came to me at first for the novelty of the thing, for I had a sprinkling of decent patients for the first twelve months, or so. But now I might as well throw my money into the gutter as spend it on circulars or advertisements."

"And a young woman with twenty thousand pounds and something amiss with her jaw hasn't turned up yet."

"No, nor an old woman either. I wouldn't stick at the age, if the money was all right," answered Mr. Sheldon bitterly.

The younger brother shrugged his shoulders and plunged his hands into his trousers-pockets with a gesture of serio-comic despair. He was the livelier of the two, and affected a slanginess of dress and talk and manner, a certain "horsey" style, very different from his elder brother's studied respectability of costume and bearing. His clothes were of a loose sporting cut, and always odorous with stale tobacco. He wore a good deal of finery in the shape of studs and pins and dangling locketts and fusee-boxes; his whiskers were more obtrusive than his brother's, and he wore a moustache in addition—a thick ragged black moustache, which would have become a guerilla chieftain rather than a dweller amidst the quiet courts and squares of Gray's Inn. His position as a lawyer was not much better than that of Philip as a dentist; but he had his own plans for making a fortune, and hoped to win for himself a larger fortune than is often made in the law. He was a hunter of genealogies, a grubber-up of forgotten facts, a joiner of broken links, a kind of legal resurrectionist, a digger in the dust and ashes of the past; and he expected in due time to dig up a treasure rich enough to reward the labour and patience of *half a life-time*.

"I can afford to wait till I'm forty for my good luck," he said to his brother sometimes in moments of expansion, "and then I shall have ten years in which to enjoy myself, and twenty more in which I shall have life enough left to eat good dinners and drink good wine, and grumble about the degeneracy of things in general, after the manner of elderly human nature."

The men stood one on each side of the hearth: George looking at his brother, Philip looking down at the fire, with his eyes shaded by their thick black lashes. The fire had become dull and hollow. George bent down presently and stirred the coals impatiently.

"If there's one thing I hate more than another—and I hate a good many things—it's a bad fire," he said. "How's Barlingford—lively as ever, I suppose?"

"Not much livelier than it was when we left it. Things have gone amiss with me in London, and I've been more than once sorely tempted to make an end of my difficulties with a razor or a few drops of prussic acid; but when I saw the dull gray streets and the square gray houses, and the empty market-place, and the Baptist chapel, and the Unitarian chapel, and the big stony church, and heard the dreary bells ding-donging for evening service, I wondered how I could ever have existed a week in such a place. I had rather sweep a crossing in London than occupy the best house in Barlingford, and I told Tom Halliday so."

"And Tom is coming to London I understand by your letter."

"Yes, he has sold Hyley, and wants to find a place in the west of England. The north doesn't suit him. He and Georgy are coming up to town for a few weeks, so I've asked them to stay here. I may as well make some use of the house, for it's very little good in a professional sense."

"Humph!" muttered George; "I don't see your motive."

"I have no particular motive. Tom's a good fellow, and his company will be better than an empty house. The visit won't cost me any thing—Halliday is to go shares in the house-keeping."

"Well, you may find it answer that way," replied Mr. Sheldon the younger, who considered that every action of a man's life ought to be made to "answer" in some way. "But I should think you would be rather bored by the arrangement; Tom's a very good fellow in his way, and a great friend of mine, but he's rather an empty-headed animal."

The subject dropped here, and the brothers went on talking of Barlingford and Barlingford people—the few remaining kindred whose existence made a kind of link between the two men and their native town, and the boon-companions of their early manhood. The dentist produced the remnant of a bottle of whisky from the sideboard for his own and his brother's refreshment; but the conversation flagged nevertheless. Philip Sheldon was dull and absent, answering his companion at random every now and then, much to that gentleman's

aggravation; and he owned at last to being thoroughly tired and worn out.

"The journey from Barlingford in a slow train is no joke, you know, George, and I couldn't afford the express," he said apologetically, when his brother upbraided him for his distraction of manner.

"Then I should think you'd better go to bed," answered Mr. Sheldon the younger, who had smoked a couple of cigars, and consumed the contents of the whisky-bottle with a due admixture of boiling water and lump-sugar; "so I'll take myself off. I told you how uncommonly seedy you were looking when I first came in. When do you expect Tom and his wife?"

"At the beginning of next week."

"So soon! Well, good night, old fellow; I shall see you before they come, I daresay. You might as well drop in upon me at my place to-morrow night. I'm hard at work on a job."

"Your old kind of work?"

"O, yes. I don't get much work of any other kind."

"And I'm afraid you'll never get much good out of that."

"I don't know. A man who sits down to whist gets a good many queer cards sometimes before he gets a handful of trumps; but the trump cards are sure to come if he only sits long enough. Every man has his chance, depend upon it, Phil, if he knows how to watch for it; but there are so many men who get tired and go to sleep before their chances come to them. I've wasted a good deal of time, and a good deal of labour; but the trumps are in the pack, and they must turn up sooner or later. Ta-ta."

George Sheldon nodded and departed, whistling gaily as he walked away from his brother's door. Philip heard him, and turned his chair to the fire with a movement of impatience.

"You may be uncommonly clever, my dear George," soliloquised the dentist, "but you'll never make a fortune by reading wills and hunting in parish-registers for heirs-at-law. A big lump of money is not very likely to go a-begging while any one who can fudge up the faintest pretence of a claim to it is above ground. No, no, my lad, you must find a better way than that before you'll make your fortune."

The fire had burnt low again, and Mr. Sheldon sat staring gloomily at the blackening coals. Things were very bad with him—he had not cared to confess how bad they were, when he had discussed his affairs with his brother. Those neighbours and passers-by who admired the trim brightness of the dentist's abode had no suspicion that the master of that respectable house was in the hands of the Jews, and that the hearth-stone which whitened his door-step was paid for out of Israelitish coffers. The dentist's philosophy was all of this world, and he knew that the soldier of fortune, who would fain be a conqueror in *the great battle*, must needs keep his plumage

undrabbed and the golden facings of his uniform untarnished, let his wounds be never so desperate.

Having found his attempt to establish a practice in Fitzgeorge-street a failure, the only course open to Mr. Sheldon, as a man of the world, was to transfer his failure to somebody else, with more or less profit to himself. To this end he preserved the spotless purity of his muslin curtains, though the starch that stiffened them and the bleaching-powder that whitened them were bought with money for which he was to pay sixty per cent. To this end he nursed that wan shadow of a practice, and sustained that appearance of respectability which, in a world where appearance stands for so much, is in itself a kind of capital. It certainly was dull dreary work to hold the citadel of No. 14 Fitzgeorge-street against the besieger Poverty; but the dentist stood his ground pertinaciously, knowing that if he only waited long enough, the dupe who was to be his victim would come, and knowing also that there might arrive a day when it would be very useful for him to be able to refer to four years' unblemished respectability as a Bloomsbury householder. He had his lines set in several shady places for that unhappy fish with a small capital, and he had been tantalised by more than one nibble; but he made no open show of his desire to sell his business—since a business that is obviously in the market seems scarcely worth any man's purchase.

Things had of late grown worse with him every day; for every interval of twenty-four hours sinks a man so much the deeper in the mire when renewed accommodation-bills with his name upon them are ripening in the iron safes of Judah. Philip Sheldon found himself sinking gradually and almost imperceptibly into that bottomless pit of difficulty in whose black depths the demon Insolvency holds his dreary court. While his little capital lasted he had kept himself clear of debt, but that being exhausted, and his practice growing worse day by day, he had been fain to seek assistance from money-lenders; and now even the money-lenders were tired of him. The chair in which he sat, the poker which he swung slowly to and fro, as he bent over his hearth, were not his own. One of his Jewish creditors had a bill of sale on his furniture, and he might come home any day to find the auctioneer's bills plastered against the wall of his house, and the auctioneer's clerk busy with the catalogue of his possessions. If the expected victim came now to buy his practice, the sacrifice would be made too late to serve his interest. The men who had lent him money would be the sole gainers by the bargain.

Seldom does a man find himself face to face with a blacker prospect than that which lay before Philip Sheldon; and yet his manner tonight was not the dull blank apathy of despair. It was the manner of a man whose brain is occupied with busy thoughts; who has some elaborate scheme to map out and arrange before he is called upon to carry his plans into action.

"It would be a good business for me," he muttered, "if I had pluck enough to carry it through."

The fire went quite out as he sat swinging the poker backwards and forwards. The clocks of Bloomsbury and St. Pancras struck twelve, and still Philip Sheldon pondered and plotted by that dreary hearth. The servants had retired at eleven, after a good deal of blundering with bars and shutters, and unnecessary banging of doors. That unearthly silence peculiar to houses after midnight reigned in Mr. Sheldon's domicile, and he could hear the voices of distant roysterers, and the miauling of neighbouring cats, with a painful distinctness, as he sat brooding in his silent room. The fact that a mahogany cheffonier in a corner gave utterance to a faint groan occasionally, as of some feeble creature in pain, afforded him no annoyance. He was superior to superstitious fancies, and all the rappings and scratchings of spirit-land would have failed to disturb his equanimity. He was a strictly practical man—one of those men who are always ready, with a stump of lead-pencil and the back of a letter, to reduce every thing in creation to figures.

"I had better read-up that business before they come," he said, when he had to all appearance "thought out" the subject of his reverie. "No time so good as this for doing it quietly. One never knows who is spying about in the daytime."

He looked at his watch, and then went to a cupboard, where there were bundles of wood and matches and old newspapers,—for it was his habit to light his own fire occasionally when he worked unusually late at night or early in the morning. He relighted his fire now as cleverly as any housemaid in Bloomsbury, and stood watching it till it burned briskly. Then he lit a taper, and went downstairs to the professional torture-chamber. The tall horsehair chair looked unutterably awful in the dim glimmer of the taper, and a nervous person could almost have fancied it occupied by the ghost of some patient who had expired under the agony of the forceps. Mr. Sheldon lighted the gas in a movable branch which he was in the habit of turning almost into the mouths of the patients who consulted him at night. There was a cupboard on each side of the mantelpiece, and it was in these two cupboards that the dentist kept his professional library. His books did not form a very valuable collection, but he kept the cupboards constantly locked nevertheless.

He took the key from his waistcoat-pocket, opened one of the cupboards, and took out a pile of heavy books. They were bound volumes of *The Lancet*, and they were almost as much as he could carry. But he managed to pack them in his arms, and conveyed them safely to the room above, where he seated himself under the gas with the volumes before him. He sat looking through these volumes, stopping now and then to read an article with studious

attention, and making numerous notes in a thick little oblong memorandum-book, until the Bloomsbury clocks struck three.

CHAPTER III.

MR. AND MRS. HALLIDAY.

MR. SHELDON'S visitors arrived in due course. They were provincial people of the middle-class, accounted monstrously genteel in their own neighbourhood, but in no wise resembling Londoners of the same rank.

Mr. Thomas Halliday was a big, loud-spoken, good-tempered Yorkshireman, who had inherited a comfortable little estate from a plodding, money-making father, and for whom life had been very easy. He was a farmer, and nothing but a farmer; a man for whom the supremest pleasure of existence was a cattle-show or a country horse-fair. The farm upon which he had been born and brought up was situated about six miles from Barlingford, and all the delights of his boyhood and youth were associated with that small market-town. He and the two Sheldons had been schoolfellows, and afterwards boon companions, taking such pleasure as was obtainable in Barlingford together; flirting with the same provincial beauties at prim tea-parties in the winter, and getting up friendly picnics in the summer,—picnics at which eating and drinking were the leading features of the day's entertainment. Mr. Halliday had always regarded George and Philip Sheldon with that reverential admiration which a stupid man, who is conscious of his own mental inferiority, generally feels for a clever friend and companion. But he was also fully aware of the advantage which a rich man possesses over a poor one, and would not have exchanged the fertile acres of Hyley for the intellectual gifts of his schoolfellows. He had found the substantial value of his handsomely-furnished house and well-stocked farm when he and his friend Philip Sheldon became suitors for the hand of Georgina Cradock, youngest daughter of a Barlingford attorney, who lived next door to the Barlingford dentist, Philip Sheldon's father. Philip and the girl had been playfellows in the long walled gardens behind the two houses, and there had been a brotherly and sisterly intimacy between the juvenile members of the two families. But when Philip and Georgina met at the Barlingford tea-parties in later years, the parental powers frowned upon any renewal of that childish friendship. Miss Cradock had no portion, and the worthy solicitor her father was a prudent man, who was apt to look for the promise of domestic happiness in the plate-basket and the linen-press, rather than for such superficial qualifications as black whiskers and white teeth. So poor Philip was "thrown over the bridge," as he said himself, and Georgy Cradock married Mr. Halliday, with all attendant ceremony and splendour, according to the "lights" of Barlingford gentry.

But this provincial bride's story was no passionate record of anguish

and tears. The Barlingford Juliet had liked Romeo as much as she was capable of liking any one; but when Papa Capulet insisted on her union with Paris, she accepted her destiny with decent resignation, and, in the absence of any sympathetic father confessor, was fain to seek consolation from a more mundane individual in the person of the Barlingford milliner. Nor did Philip Sheldon give evidence of any extravagant despair. His father was something of a doctor as well as a dentist; and there were plenty of dark little phials lurking on the shelves of his surgery in which the young man could have found "mortal drugs," without the aid of the apothecary, had he been so minded. Happily no such desperate idea ever occurred to him in connection with his grief. He held himself sulkily aloof from Mr. and Mrs. Halliday for some time after their marriage, and allowed people to see that he considered himself very hardly used; but prudence, which had always been Philip Sheldon's counsellor, proved herself also his consoler in this crisis of his life. A careful consideration of his own interests led him to perceive that the successful result of his love-suit would have been about the worst thing that could have happened to him.

Georgina had no money. All was said in that. As the young dentist's philosophy of this world ripened under the influence of experience, he discovered that the worldly ease of the best man in Barlingford was something like that of a canary-bird who inhabits a clean cage and is supplied with abundant seed and water. The cage is eminently comfortable, and the sleepy, respectable, elderly bird sighs for no better abiding-place, no wider prospect than that patch of the universe which he sees between the bars. But now and then there is hatched a wild young fledgling, which beats its wings against the inexorable wires, and would fain soar away into that wide outer world, to prosper or perish in its freedom.

Before Georgy had been married a year, her sometime lover had fully resigned himself to the existing state of things, and was on the best possible terms with his friend Tom. He could eat his dinner in the comfortable house at Hyley with an excellent appetite; for there was a gulf between him and his old love far wider than any that had been dug by that ceremonial in the parish-church of Barlingford. Philip Sheldon had awakened to the consciousness that life in his native town was little more than a kind of animal vegetation—the life of some palpy invertebrate creature, which sprawls helplessly upon the sands whereon the wave has deposited it, and may be cloven in half without feeling itself noticeably worse for the operation. He had awakened to the knowledge that there was a wider and more agreeable world beyond that little provincial borough, and that a handsome face and figure and a vigorous intellect were commodities for which there must be some kind of market.

Once convinced of the utter worthlessness of his prospects in Barlingford, Mr. Sheldon turned his eyes Londonwards; and his father

happening at this time very conveniently to depart this life, Philip, the son and heir, disposed of the business to an aspiring young practitioner, and came to the metropolis, where he made that futile attempt to establish himself which has been described.

The dentist had wasted four years in London, and nine years had gone by since Georgy's wedding; and now for the first time he had an opportunity of witnessing the domestic happiness or the domestic misery of the woman who had jilted him, and the man who had been his successful rival. He set himself to watch them with the cool deliberation of a social anatomist, and he experienced very little difficulty in the performance of this moral dissection. They were established under his roof, his companions at every meal; and they were the kind of people who discuss their grievances and indulge in their "little differences" with perfect freedom in the presence of a third, or a fourth, or even a fifth party.

Mr. Sheldon was wise enough to preserve a strict neutrality. He would take up a newspaper at the beginning of a little difference, and lay it down when the little difference was finished, with the most perfect assumption of unconsciousness; but it is doubtful whether the matrimonial disputants were sufficiently appreciative of this good breeding. They would have liked to have had Mr. Sheldon for a court of appeal; and a little interference from him would have given zest to their quarrels. Meanwhile Philip watched them slyly from the covert of his newspaper, and formed his own conclusions about them. If he was pleased to see that his false love's path was not entirely rose-bestrewn, or if he rejoiced at beholding the occasional annoyance of his rival, he allowed no evidence of his pleasure to appear in his face or manner.

Georgina Cradock's rather insipid prettiness had developed into matronly comeliness. Her fair complexion and pink cheeks had lost none of their freshness. Her smooth auburn hair was as soft and bright as it had been when she had braided it preparatory to a Barlingford tea-party in the days of her spinsterhood. She was a pretty, weak little woman, whose education had never gone beyond the routine of a provincial boarding-school, and who thought that she had attained all necessary wisdom in having mastered Pinnock's abridgments of Goldsmith's histories and the rudiments of the French language. She was a woman who thought that the perfection of feminine costume was a moire-antique dress and a conspicuous gold-chain. She was a woman who considered a well-furnished house and a horse and gig the highest form of earthly splendour or prosperity.

This was the shallow commonplace creature whom Philip Sheldon had once admired and wooed. He looked at her now, and wondered how he could ever have felt even as much as he had felt on her account. But he had little leisure to devote to any such abstract and useless consideration. He had his own affairs to think about, and they were very desperate.

In the mean time Mr. and Mrs. Halliday occupied themselves in the pursuit of pleasure or business, as the case might be. They were eager for amusement: went to exhibitions in the day and to theatres at night, and came home to cozy little suppers in Fitzgeorge-street, after which Mr. Halliday was wont to waste the small hours in friendly conversation with his quondam companion, and in the consumption of much brandy-and-water.

Unhappily for poor Georgy, these halcyon days were broken by intervals of storm and cloud. The weak little woman was afflicted with that intermittent fever called jealousy; and the stalwart Thomas was one of those men who can scarcely give the time of day to a feminine acquaintance without some ornate and loud-spoken gallantry. Having no intellectual resources wherewith to beguile the tedium of his idle prosperous life, he was fain to seek pleasure in the companionship of other men; and had thus become a haunter of tavern-parlours and small race-courses, being always ready for any amusement his friends proposed to him. It followed, therefore, that he was very often absent from his commonplace, substantial home and his pretty weak-minded wife. And poor Georgy had ample food for her jealous fears and suspicions; for where might a man not be who was so seldom at home? She had never been particularly fond of her husband, but that was no reason why she should not be particularly jealous about him; and her jealousy betrayed itself in a peevish worrying fashion, which was harder to bear than the vengeful ferocity of a Clytemnestra. It was in vain that Thomas Halliday and those jolly good fellows his friends and companions attested the Arcadian innocence of race-courses, and the perfect purity of that smoky atmosphere peculiar to tavern-parlours. Georgy's suspicions were too vague for refutation; but they were nevertheless sufficient ground for all the alternations of temper—from stolid sulking to peevish whining, from murmured lamentations to loud hysterics—to which the female temperament is liable.

In the mean time poor honest, loud-spoken Tom did all in his power to demonstrate his truth and devotion. He bought his wife as many stiff silk-gowns and gaudy Barlingford bonnets as she chose to sigh for. He made a will, in which she was sole legatee, and insured his life in different offices to the amount of five thousand pounds.

“I'm the sort of fellow that's likely to go off the hooks suddenly, you know, Georgy,” he said, “and your poor dad was always anxious I should make things square for you. I don't suppose you're likely to marry again, my lass, so I've no need to tie up Lottie's little fortune. I must trust some one, and I'd better confide in my own little wife than in some canting methodistical fellow of a trustee, who would speculate my daughter's money upon some Stock-Exchange hazard, and levant to Australia when it was all swamped. If you can't trust me, Georgy, I'll let you see that I can trust you,” added Tom, reproachfully.

Wherenpon poor weak little Mrs. Halliday murmured plaintively

that she did not want fortunes or life-insurances, but that she wanted her husband to stay at home, content with the calm and rather sleepy delights of his own fireside. Poor Tom was wont to promise amendment, and would keep his promise faithfully so long as no supreme temptation, in the shape of a visit from some friend of the jolly-good-fellow species, arose to vanquish his good resolutions. But a good-tempered, generous-hearted young man who farms his own land, has three or four good horses in his stable, a decent cellar of honest port and sherry,—none of your wishy-washy sour stuff in the way of hock or claret,—and a very comfortable balance at his banker's, finds it no easy matter to shake off friends of the jolly-good-fellow fraternity. Is it not the speciality of "jolly dogs" to be "here again," whether you will or no?

In London Mr. Halliday found the spirit of jolly-dog-ism rampant. George Sheldon had always been his favourite of the two brothers; and it was George who lured him from the safe shelter of Fitzgeorge-street and took him to mysterious haunts, whence he returned long after midnight, boisterous of manner and unsteady of gait, and with garments reeking of stale tobacco-smoke.

He was always good-tempered, even after these diabolical orgies on some unknown Brocken, and protested indistinctly that there was no harm "'pon m' wor', ye know, ol' gur'! Geor' an' me—half-dozen oyst'r—c'gar—botl' p'l ale—str't home," and much more to the same effect. When did any married man ever take *more* than half-a-dozen oysters—or take any undomestic pleasure for his *own* satisfaction? It is always those incorrigible bachelors, Thomas, Richard, or Henry, who hinder the unwilling Benedict from returning to his sacred Lares and Penates.

Poor Georgy was not to be pacified by protestations about oysters and cigars from the lips of a husband who was thick of utterance, and who betrayed a general imbecility of mind and unsteadiness of body. This London excursion, which had begun in sunshine, threatened to end in storm and darkness. George Sheldon and his set had taken possession of the young farmer; and Georgy had no better amusement in the long blustering March evenings than to sit at her work under the flaming gas in Mr. Sheldon's drawing-room, while that gentleman—who rarely joined in the dissipations of his friend and his brother—occupied himself with mechanical dentistry in the chamber of torture below.

Fitzgeorge-street in general, always on the watch to discover evidences of impecuniosity or doubtful morality on the part of any one citizen in particular, could find no food for scandal in the visit of Mr. and Mrs. Halliday to their friend and countryman. It had been noised abroad, through the agency of Mrs. Woolper, that Mr. Sheldon had been a suitor for the lady's hand, and had been jilted by her. The Fitzgeorgians had been, therefore, especially on the alert to detect any

sign of backsliding in the dentist. There would have been much pleasant discussion in kitchens and back-parlours if Mr. Sheldon had been particularly attentive to his fair guest ; but it speedily became known, always by the agency of Mrs. Woolper and that phenomenon of idleness and iniquity, the London "girl," that Mr. Sheldon was not by any means attentive to the pretty young woman from Yorkshire—but that he suffered her to sit alone hour after hour in her husband's absence—with no amusement but her needlework wherewith to "pass the time," while he scraped and filed and polished those fragments of bone which were to assist in the renovation of decayed beauty.

The third week of Mr. and Mrs. Halliday's visit was near its close, and as yet the young farmer had arrived at no decision as to the subject which had brought him to London. The sale of Hyley Farm was an accomplished fact ; and the purchase-money duly bestowed at Tom's bankers ; but very little had been done towards finding the new property which was to be a substitute for the estate his father and grandfather had farmed before him. He had seen auctioneers, and had brought home plans of estates in Herefordshire and Devonshire, Cornwall and Somersetshire, all of which seemed to be, in their way, the most perfect things imaginable—land of such fertility as one would scarcely expect to find out of Arcadia—live stock which seemed beyond all price, to be taken at a valuation—roads and surrounding neighbourhood unparalleled in beauty and convenience—outbuildings that must have been the very archetypes of barns and stables—a house which to inhabit would be to adore. But as yet he had seen none of these peerless domains. He was waiting for decent weather in which to run down to the West and "look about him," as he said himself. In the mean time the blustering March weather, which was so unsuited to long railroad journeys, and all that waiting about at junctions and at little windy stations on branch-lines, incidental to the inspection of estates scattered over a large area of country, served very well for "jolly-dog-ism"—and what with a hand at cards in George Sheldon's chambers, and another hand at cards in somebody else's chambers, and a run down to an early meeting at Newmarket, and an evening at some rooms where there was something to be seen which was as near prize-fighting as the law allowed, and other evenings in unknown regions, Mr. Halliday found time slipping by him, and his domestic peace vanishing away.

It was on an evening at the end of this third week that Mr. Sheldon abandoned his mechanical dentistry for once in a way, and ascended to the drawing-room, where poor Georgy sat busy with that eternal needlework, but for which melancholy madness would surely overtake many desolate matrons in houses whose commonplace comfort and respectable dulness are more dismal than the picturesque dreariness of a moated grange amid the Lincolnshire fens. To the masculine mind this needlework seems nothing more than a purposeless stabbing and

sewing of strips of calico ; but to lonely womanhood it is the prison-flower of the captive, it is the spider of Latude.

Mr. Sheldon brought his guest an evening newspaper.

"There's an account of the opening of Parliament," he said, "which you may perhaps like to see. I wish I had a piano, or some female acquaintances to drop in upon you. I'm afraid you must be dull in these long evenings when Tom is out of the way."

"I am indeed dull," Mrs. Halliday answered peevishly ; "and if Tom cared for me, he wouldn't leave me like this evening after evening. But he doesn't care for me."

Mr. Sheldon laid down the newspaper, and seated himself opposite his guest. He sat for a few minutes in silence, beating time to some imaginary air with the tips of his fingers on the old-fashioned mahogany table. Then he said, with a half-smile upon his face :

"But surely Tom is the best of husbands ! He has been a little wild since his coming to London, I know ; but then you see he doesn't often come to town."

"He's just as bad in Yorkshire," Georgy answered gloomily ; "he is always going to Barlingford with somebody or other, or to meet some of his old friends. I'm sure, if I had known what he was, I would never have married him."

"Why, I thought he was such a good husband. He was telling me only a few days ago how he had made a will leaving you every sixpence he possesses, without reservation, and how he has insured his life for five thousand pounds."

"O, yes, I know that ; but I don't call *that* being a good husband. I don't want him to leave me his money. I don't want him to die. I want him to stay at home."

"Poor Tom ! I'm afraid he's not the sort of man for that kind of thing. He likes change and amusement. You married a rich man, Mrs. Halliday ; you made your choice, you know, without regard to the feelings of any one else. You sacrificed truth and honour to your own inclination, or your own interest, I do not know, and I do not ask which. If the bargain has turned out a bad one, that's your look-out."

Philip Sheldon sat with his folded arms resting on the little table, and his eyes fixed on Georgy's face. They could be very stern and hard and cruel, those bright black eyes, and Mrs. Halliday grew first red and then pale under their searching gaze. She had seen Mr. Sheldon very often during the years of her married life, but this was the first time he had ever said any thing to her that sounded like a reproach. The dentist's eyes softened a little as he watched her, not with any special tenderness, but with an expression of half-disdainful compassion—such as a strong stern man might feel for a foolish child. He could see that this woman was afraid of him, and it served his interests *that she should fear him*. He had a purpose in every thing he did,

and his purpose to-night was to test the strength of his influence over Georgina Halliday. In the old time before her marriage that influence had been very strong. It was for him to discover now whether it still endured.

"You made your choice, Mrs. Halliday," he went on presently, "and it was a choice which all prudent people must have approved. What chance had a man, who was only heir to a practice worth four or five hundred pounds, against the inheritor of Hyley Farm with its two hundred and fifty acres, and three thousand pounds' worth of live stock, plant, and working capital? When do the prudent people ever stop to consider truth and honour, or old promises, or an affection that dates from childhood? They calculate every thing by pounds, shillings, and pence; and according to their mode of reckoning you were in the right when you jilted me to marry Tom Halliday."

Georgy laid down her work and took out her handkerchief. She was one of those women who take refuge in tears when they find themselves at a disadvantage. Tears had always melted honest Tom, was his wrath never so dire, and tears would no doubt subdue Philip Sheldon.

But Georgy had to discover that the dentist was made of a stuff very different from that softer clay which composed the rollicking good-tempered farmer. Mr. Sheldon watched her tears with the cold-blooded deliberation of a scientific experimentalist. He was glad to find that he could make her cry. She was a necessary instrument in the working out of certain plans that he had made for himself, and he was anxious to discover whether she was likely to be a plastic instrument. He knew that her love for him had never been worth much at its best, and that the poor little flickering flame had been utterly extinguished by nine years of commonplace domesticity and petty jealousy. But his purpose was one that would be served as well by her fear as by her love, and he had set himself to-night to gauge his power in relation to this poor weak creature.

"It's very unkind of you to say such dreadful things, Mr. Sheldon," she whimpered presently; "you know very well that my marriage with Tom was pa's doing, and not mine. I'm sure if I'd known how he would stay out night after night, and come home in such dreadful states time after time, I never would have consented to marry him."

"Wouldn't you?—O, yes you would. If you were a widow to-morrow, and free to marry again, you would choose just such another man as Tom—a man who laughs loud, and pays flourishing compliments, and drives a gig with a high-stepping horse. That's the sort of man women like, and that's the sort of man you'd marry."

"I'm sure I shouldn't marry at all," answered Mrs. Halliday, in a voice that was broken by little gasping sobs. "I have seen enough of the misery of married life. But I don't want Tom to die, unkind as he is to me. *People are always saying that he won't make old bones—*

how horrid it is to talk of a person's bones!—and I'm sure I sometimes make myself wretched about him, as he knows, though he doesn't thank me for it."

And here Mrs. Halliday's sobs got the better of her utterance, and Mr. Sheldon was fain to say something of a consolatory nature.

"Come, come," he said, "I won't tease you any more. That's against the laws of hospitality, isn't it?—only there are some things which you can't expect a man to forget, you know. However, let bygones be bygones. As for poor old Tom, I daresay he'll live to be a hale, hearty old man, in spite of the croakers. People always will croak about something; and it's a kind of fashion to say that a big, hearty, six-foot man is a fragile blossom likely to be nipped by any wintry blast. Come, come, Mrs. Halliday, your husband mustn't discover that I've been making you cry when he comes home. He may be home early this evening, perhaps; and if he is, we'll have an oyster supper, and a chat about old times."

Mrs. Halliday shook her head dolefully.

"It's past ten o'clock already," she said, "and I don't suppose Tom will be home till after twelve. He doesn't like my sitting up for him; but I wonder *what* time he would come home if I didn't sit up for him?"

"Let's hope for the best," exclaimed Mr. Sheldon, cheerfully. "I'll go and see about the oysters."

"Don't get them for me, or for Tom," protested Mrs. Halliday; "he will have had his supper when he comes home, you may be sure, and I couldn't eat a morsel of any thing."

To this resolution Mrs. Halliday adhered; so the dentist was fain to abandon all jovial ideas in relation to oysters and pale ale. But he did not go back to his mechanical dentistry. He sat opposite his visitor, and watched her, silently and thoughtfully, for some time as she worked. She had brushed away her tears, but she looked very peevish and miserable, and took out her watch several times in an hour. Mr. Sheldon made two or three feeble attempts at conversation, but the talk languished and expired on each occasion, and they sat on in silence.

Little by little the dentist's attention seemed to wander away from his guest. He wheeled his chair round, and sat looking at the fire, with the same fixed gloom upon his face which had darkened it on the night of his return from Yorkshire. Things had been so desperate with him of late, that he had lost his old orderly habit of thinking out a business at one sitting, and making an end of all deliberation and hesitation about it. There were subjects that forced themselves upon his thoughts, and certain ideas which repeated themselves with a stupid persistence. He was such an eminently practical man, that this disorder of his brain troubled him more even than the thoughts that made *the disorder*. He sat in the same attitude for a long while, scarcely

conscious of Mrs. Halliday's presence, not at all conscious of the progress of time.

Georgy had been right in her gloomy forebodings of bad behaviour on the part of Mr. Halliday. It was nearly one o'clock when a loud double knock announced that gentleman's return. The wind had been howling drearily, and a sharp, slanting rain had been pattering against the windows for the last half-hour, while Mrs. Halliday's breast had been racked by the contending emotions of anxiety and indignation.

"I suppose he couldn't get a cab," she exclaimed, as the knock startled her from her listening attitude; for however intently a midnight watcher may be listening for the returning wanderer's knock, it is not the less startling when it comes. "And he has walked home through the wet, and now he'll have a violent cold, I daresay," added Georgy, peevishly.

"Then it's lucky for him he's in a doctor's house," answered Mr. Sheldon, with a smile. He was a handsome man no doubt, according to the popular idea of masculine perfection, but he had *not* a pleasant smile. "I went through the regular routine, you know, and am as well able to see a patient safely through a cold or a fever as I am to make him a set of teeth."

Mr. Halliday burst into the room at this moment, singing a fragment of the "Chough and Crow" chorus, very much out of tune. He was in boisterously high spirits, and very little the worse for liquor. He had only walked from Covent Garden, he said, and had taken nothing but a tankard of stout and a Welsh rarebit. He had been hearing the divinest singing—boys with the voices of angels—and had been taking his supper in a place which duchesses themselves did not disdain to peep at from the sacred recesses of a *loge grillée*, George Sheldon had told him. But poor country-bred Georgina Halliday would not believe in the duchesses, or the angelic singing-boys, or the primitive simplicity of Welsh rarebits. She had a vision of beautiful women, and halls of dazzling light; where there was the mad music of perpetual post-horn galops, with a riotous accompaniment of huzzahs, and the popping of champagne corks; where the sheen of satin and the glitter of gems bewildered the eye of the beholder. She had seen such a picture once on the stage, and had vaguely associated it with all Tom's midnight roysterings ever afterwards.

The roysterer's garments were very wet, and it was in vain that his wife and Philip Sheldon entreated him to change them for dry ones, or to go to bed immediately. He stood before the fire relating his innocent adventures, and trying to dispel the cloud from Georgy's fair young brow; and, when he did at last consent to go to his room, the dentist shook his head ominously.

"You'll have a severe cold to-morrow, depend upon it, Tom, and you'll have yourself to thank for it," he said, as he bade the goodtempered *reprobate good-night*.

"Never mind, old fellow," answered Tom; "if I am ill, you shall nurse me. If one is doomed to die by doctor's stuff, it's better to have a doctor one does know than a doctor one doesn't know for one's executioner."

After which graceful piece of humour Mr. Halliday went blundering up the staircase, followed by his aggrieved wife.

Philip Sheldon stood on the landing looking after his visitors for some minutes. Then he went slowly back to the sitting-room, where he replenished the fire, and seated himself before it with a newspaper in his hand.

"What's the use of going to bed, if I can't sleep?" he muttered, in a discontented tone.

CHAPTER IV.

A PERPLEXING ILLNESS.

MR. SHELDON'S prophecy was fully realised. Tom Halliday awoke the next day with a violent cold in his head. Like most big boisterous men of herculean build, he was the veriest craven in the hour of physical ailment; so he succumbed at once to the malady which a man obliged to face the world and fight for his daily bread must needs have made light of.

The dentist rallied his invalid friend.

"Keep your bed, if you like, Tom," he said, "but there's no necessity for any such coddling. As your hands are hot, and your tongue rather queer, I may as well give you a saline draught. You'll be all right by dinner time, and I'll get George to look round in the evening for a hand at cards."

Tom obeyed his professional friend—took his medicine, read the paper, and slept away the best part of the dull March day. At half-past five he got up and dressed for dinner, and the evening passed very pleasantly; so pleasantly, indeed, that Georgy was half-inclined to wish that her husband might be afflicted with chronic influenza, whereby he would be compelled to stop at home. She sighed when Philip Sheldon slapped his friend's broad shoulder, and told him cheerily that he would be "all right to-morrow." He would be well again, and there would be more midnight roystering, and she would be again tormented by that vision of lighted halls and beautiful diabolical creatures revolving madly to the music of the Post-horn Galop.

It seemed, however, that poor jealous Mrs. Halliday was to be spared her nightly agony for some time to come. Tom's cold lasted longer than he had expected, and the cold was succeeded by a low fever—a bilious fever, Mr. Sheldon said. There was not the least occasion for alarm, of course. The invalid and the invalid's wife *trusted implicitly* in the friendly doctor, who assured them both that

Tom's attack was the most ordinary kind of thing ; a little wearing, no doubt, but entirely without danger. He had to repeat this assurance very often to Georgy, whose angry feelings had given place to extreme tenderness and affection now that Tom was an invalid, quite unfitted for the society of jolly-good-fellows, and willing to receive basins of beef-tea and arrow-root meekly from his wife's hands, instead of those edibles of iniquity, oysters and toasted cheese.

Mr. Halliday's illness was very tiresome. It was one of those perplexing complaints which keep the patient himself, and the patient's friends and attendants, in perpetual uncertainty. A little worse one day, and a shade better the next; now gaining a little strength, now losing a trifle more than he had gained; the patient declined in an imperceptible manner, and it was only when he had been ill three weeks, and was no longer able to leave his bed, and had lost alike his appetite and his spirits, it was then only that Georgy awoke to the fact that this illness, hitherto considered so lightly, must be very serious.

"I think if—if you have no objection, I should like to see another doctor, Mr. Sheldon," she said, one day, with considerable embarrassment of manner. She feared to offend her host by any doubt of his skill. "You see—you—you are so much employed with teeth—and—of course you know I am quite assured of your talent—but don't you think that a doctor who had more experience in fever cases might bring Tom round quicker? He has been ill so long now; and really he doesn't seem to get any better."

Philip Sheldon shrugged his shoulders.

"As you please, my dear Mrs. Halliday," he said carelessly; "I don't wish to press my services upon you. It is quite a matter of friendship, you know, and I shall not profit sixpence by my attendance on poor old Tom. Call in another doctor, by all means, if you think fit to do so; but, of course, in that event, I must withdraw from the case. The man you call in may be clever, or he may be stupid and ignorant. It's all a chance, when one doesn't know one's man; and I really can't advise you upon that point, for I know nothing of the London profession."

Georgy looked alarmed. This was a new view of the subject. She had fancied that all regular practitioners were clever, and had only doubted Mr. Sheldon because he was not a regular practitioner. But how if she were to withdraw her husband from the hands of a clever man to deliver him into the care of an ignorant pretender, simply because she was over-anxious for his recovery?

"I always am foolishly anxious about things," she thought.

And then she looked piteously at Mr. Sheldon, and said,

"What do you think I ought to do? Pray tell me. He has eaten no breakfast again this morning; and even the cup of tea which I persuaded him to take seemed to disagree with him. And then there

is that dreadful sore throat which torments him so. What ought I to do, Mr. Sheldon?"

"Whatever seems best to yourself, Mrs. Halliday," answered the dentist earnestly. "It is a subject upon which I cannot pretend to advise you. It is a matter of feeling rather than of reason, and it is a matter which you yourself must determine. If I knew any man whom I could honestly recommend to you, it would be another affair; but I don't. Tom's illness is the simplest thing in the world, and I feel myself quite competent to pull him through it, without fuss or bother; but if you think otherwise, pray put me out of the question. There's one fact, however, of which I'm bound to remind you. Like many fine big stalwart fellows of his stamp, your husband is as nervous as a hysterical woman; and if you call in a strange doctor, who will pull long faces, and put on the professional solemnity, the chances are that he'll take alarm, and do himself more mischief in a few hours than your new adviser can undo in as many weeks."

There was a little pause after this. Georgy's opinions, and suspicions, and anxieties were alike vague; and this last suggestion of Mr. Sheldon's put things in a new and alarming light. She was really anxious about her husband, but she had been accustomed all her life to accept the opinion of other people in preference to her own.

"Do you really think that Tom will soon be well and strong again?" she asked presently.

"If I thought otherwise, I should be the first to advise other measures. However, my dear Mrs. Halliday, call in some one else, for your own satisfaction."

"No," said Georgy, sighing plaintively, "it might frighten Tom. You are quite right, Mr. Sheldon; he is very nervous, and the idea that I was alarmed might alarm him. I'll trust in you. Pray try to bring him round again. You will try, won't you?" she asked, in the childish pleading way which was peculiar to her.

The dentist was searching for something in the drawer of a table, and his back was turned upon that anxious questioner.

"You may depend upon it I'll do my best, Mrs. Halliday," he answered, still busy at the drawer.

Mr. Sheldon the younger had paid many visits to Fitzgeorge-street during Tom Halliday's illness. George and Tom had been the Damon and Pythias of Barlingford; and George seemed really distressed when he found his friend changed for the worse. The changes in the invalid were so puzzling, the alternations from better to worse, and from worse to better, so frequent, that fear could take no hold upon the minds of the patient's friends. It seemed such a very slight affair this low fever, though sufficiently inconvenient to the patient himself, who suffered a good deal from thirst and sickness, and showed *an extreme disinclination* for food, all which symptoms Mr. Sheldon

said were the commonest and simplest features of a very mild attack of bilious fever, which would leave Tom a better man than it had found him.

There had been several pleasant little card-parties during the earlier stages of Mr. Halliday's illness; but within the last week the patient had been too low and weak for cards; too weak to read the newspaper, or even to bear having it read to him. When George came to look at his old friend, "to cheer you up a little, old fellow, you know," and so on, he found Tom, for the time being, past all capability of being cheered, even by the genial society of his favourite jolly-good-fellow, or by tidings of a steeple-chase in Yorkshire, in which a neighbour had gone to grief over a double fence.

"That chap upstairs seems rather queerish," George had said to his brother, after finding Tom lower and weaker than usual. "He's in a bad way, isn't he, Phil?"

"No; there's nothing serious the matter with him. He's rather low to-night, that's all."

"Rather low!" echoed George Sheldon. "He seems to me so very low, that he can't sink much lower without going to the bottom of his grave. I'd call some one in, if I were you."

The dentist shrugged his shoulders, and made a little contemptuous noise with his lips.

"If you knew as much of doctors as I do, you wouldn't be in any hurry to trust a friend to the mercy of one," he said carelessly. "Don't you alarm yourself about Tom. He's right enough. He's been in a state of chronic over-eating and over-drinking for the last ten years, and this bilious fever will be the making of him."

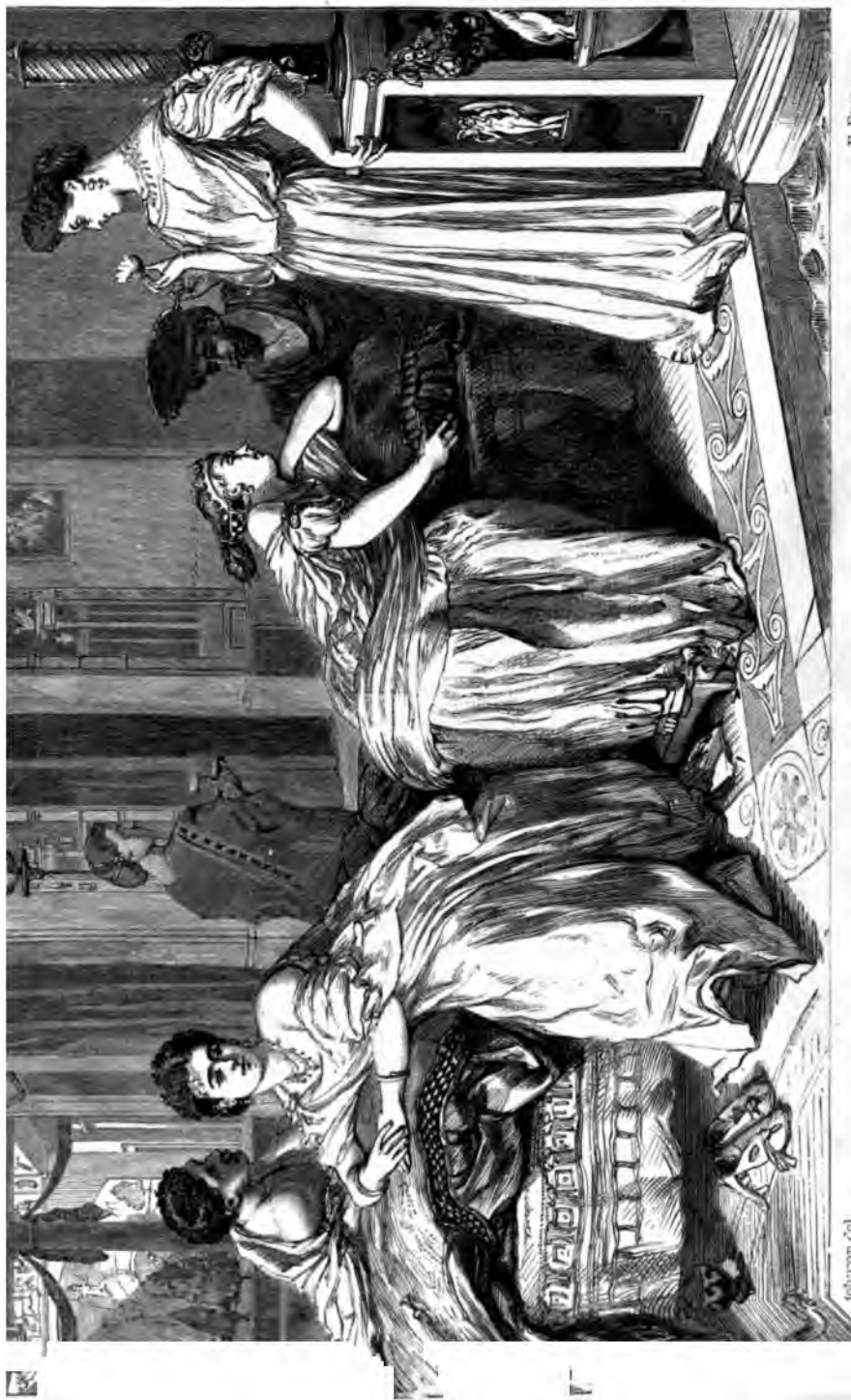
"Will it?" said George doubtfully; and then there followed a little pause, during which the brothers happened to look at each other furtively, and happened to surprise each other in the act.

"I don't know about over-eating or drinking," said George, presently; "but *something* has disagreed with Tom Halliday, that's very evident."

SWELLS

THAT interesting social curiosity which we know by the term "Swell," has, by this time, altogether disappeared from the haunts of fashion. Neither would it be easy to ascertain what has become of him; for, transformed as he now is by a change of apparel and a change of circumstances, you might hunt up and down throughout all Europe, and fail to identify in the softest and showiest you would meet, any one of those brilliant specimens of taste with which Pall Mall and Rotten Row were embellished in the "season." The heats of a London summer, no wonder, drive him away panting into the shades of rural obscurity. Then, while the icy gales of our winter threaten rheums and catarrhs, and are continually acting like a baker's rasp upon tender cuticles, the swell wisely seeks shelter behind the snow-capped hills of some snug southern retreat, where in perfect meekness he shares the amenities of society with the consul, the chaplain, and the doctor. And here the sleek and delicate Jacob of fashion, by the necessities of fate and the handiwork of Snip, is converted into a wild, shaggy, unsightly Esau. Then once again, after a little fanning by the scented zephyrs of the opening spring, this creature revisits his wonted haunts, and multitudes of his tribe, like ants let loose from their hibernation, swarm about the paths of gaiety with the same interest in the pursuit of idleness and inanity that these other tiny animals show in the maintenance of their lives.

And this personage is historical. He is not the growth merely of modern society. He existed in the classic times of Greece and Rome. Athens had its swells. Nay, the court of King Solomon was so refined about personal comeliness—which has something to do with swel-lishness—that the royal guards, who were doubtless pinks of fashion at Jerusalem, had their heads powdered with gold dust, and carried themselves, I dare swear, with that proud look and high stomach which had called down the censure of a great authority of that age and country. Then the Romans, a model people for manliness and heroism, likewise produced swells, who bathed themselves first in water and then in oil, twice as often as their ordinary countrymen, and came out from the process twice as greasy and odoriferous. Afterwards came the embroidered tunic and the lunated white toga, gathered up gingerly into those becoming folds which rendered it the most expressive article of dress in the eyes and hands of all who loved and knew how to manage the finery of costume. Neither was the hair forgotten as a source of ornament by these stern conquerors



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of the world. The manner in which it was cut and perfumed, and supplied when deficient, by the art of the wig-maker, were all marks of classical foppery. Here we have a Roman swell as complete in his generation, and as inflated, as any we can meet with in the sunshine of Rotten Row. And the subjects of Caractacus or Boadicea, with all their warlike accomplishments, were, we know, so far alive to the importance of swellishness, that their heads streamed, many of them, with such long and fragrant locks that the back of Absalom—no doubt himself distinguished for the same talents—might have been put up with spleen, envy, and indignation. And yet these heads of theirs never bowed down before the face of their enemies; which leads me to observe upon a very remarkable feature in the idiosyncrasy of a swell. Though gilded, painted, and perfumed,—with tender toes made tenderer by a reckless employment of leather, and white hands made whiter by a judicious use of kid,—this phenomenon of civilised life was never found to be deficient in spirit. Perhaps to be a swell at all—to defy the scoffs of other creatures, and set completely at naught the contempt of the wise—argues so large an amount of assurance, that after it, nothing in creation can exist too appalling to be faced with the profoundest confidence and composure. Be this as it may, the histories of the Indian mutiny, the Crimean war, and similar periods of horror and bloodshed, attest, it must be confessed, to this redeeming attribute in a thorough-bred swell; who is thus as much to be dreaded by his enemies in war, as friends, with any respect for their own complacency, would dread him in “sweet piping times of peace.”

We have had among our Fine Gentlemen—and fine gentlemen is an excellent name for the general species—Coxcombs, Fops, Bloods, Beaux, Exquisites, Dandies, and Swells. It cannot be disguised that, for the most part, these notables were, in times gone by, rakes and profligates,—Swift lumps together “fools, fops, and rakes,”—entering into all those modish vices which the most harmless set of dissolutes, your mere men about town, are never quite able to avoid; but in which these so utterly lost themselves that debauchery and immorality became the very essence of their lives, and imparted to the circle within which they moved, a reputation of the foulest and filthiest dye. But they were not necessarily rakes and profligates, but might be—perhaps were obliged to be—apparently and superficially such. A rake is a *rôle* which is acquirable by every body and any body; but a pure-bred coxcomb, or fop, or blood, or exquisite, or beau, or dandy, or swell, is a spawn of fashion, and may be as little vicious as fashion sanctions, and as much so as fashion tolerates. For his position, he owes a joint obligation alike to his stars and to himself, to his birth and to his own exertions. This is the case with all the species Fine Gentleman; and we may now be a little particular in distinguishing the nice shades which have originated its subdivisions. These subdivisions are not fanciful, nor do they *consist* in terms peculiar to the day when each

was in use ; but they serve to illustrate the character of the *beau monde* belonging to the times to which the expressions were somewhat exclusively confined. As the Coxcomb and the Dandy are distinct creatures, so their distinction bespeaks the peculiarities of those periods of fashionable history when they respectively flourished.

The age of the Stuarts was fruitful in these people of figure, and we may safely include the entire host of them among the courtiers. Cromwell was no swell, or what was in those days equivalent to a swell, most certainly; nor Monk, nor Hampden, nor Fairfax, nor Ireton, nor Pym, nor Milton, nor any single one of the Roundheads, burly and rotund as many of them unquestionably were. The cilicious covering of our heads, and that moral tumefaction which marks the strange creature we are anatomising, may after all, have some necessary connection. Perhaps there resides in the noddles of all of us a latent irritability demanding some sort of cultivation of their natural endowments; and whilst philosophers gratify this impulse by the improvement of the contents, swells, who are not philosophers, effect the same object by attention to the surface. Certain it is that, even in this age of cropping, the hair of the head is an object of intense care to the minds of all who have the meagrest pretensions to be well got up; and, as we shall see by the history of mediæval dandyism, no less than by that of its origin, the hairdresser had always a part to play which was fraught with the gravest responsibilities.

It was not until after the days of the Stuarts that we got to particularise these rakish young fellows by distinctive names. They all passed originally for coxcombs and fops; and whatever character might properly attach to these terms, its modifications, under varying influences, were not thought enough to render necessary the adoption of a new epithet. But in the reign of Queen Anne, the world grew more precise, and ever since has somewhat refined upon coxcombry. The jester or court fool cleared the way for jesters on their own account, and fools out of court. This comprehensive designation, Coxcomb, which is older than Shakespeare, was in the first instance synonymous with simpleton. A licensed fool wore at the top of his cap an ornament resembling the comb of a cock, and hence "cock's comb" became a sort of nickname applied to every shallow, saucy, ostentatious fellow, whose wits were less conspicuous than his apparel. Fop, the etymology of which is probably derived from cant phraseology, is also a very old word to express the same thing; but in time both acquired a more determinate meaning, or represented the same character adapted to the changed circumstances of the day. And when, as we have said, people became more fastidious in the niceties of classification, the "Bloods" were introduced, who were the specific coxcombs or fops of the hour, coxcomb and fop being terms sometime afterwards revived, to express this time, not any race of the old-fashioned puppy, but a slightly different variety of gay humanity, peculiar in itself, or in its

conformity to the ever-shifting laws and usages of polite society. These vague coxcombs and fops of the Tudors and the first Stuarts are musty, worm-eaten, and cobwebby, and withal too hazy and indefinite in their lineaments to make good studies for our edification. They lie buried in antiquarianism. Indeed the whole history of fine gentlemen, which has any charm of modernness about it, is contained on this side the Revolution.

Zounds! these young Bloods (with whom, then, it is proper to begin) were formidable remnants of the set of hybrids—half monkeys, half tigers—bequeathed to posterity by the Jameses and Charleses of the English throne. Yet they were in some sense novelties, and had much originality about them. Their acquirements embraced, as a thing of prime importance, the art of handling a comb with sufficient adroitness to set themselves off to advantage in places of public resort; the thick and flowing curls—whether produced by their own heads or the tails of their horses—with which fashion adorned them, rendering this operation of combing, one of frequent, troublesome, but necessary recurrence; and a fair occasion it was for the exhibition of graceful affectation. Hence the origin of that conversion of the fingers into a comb, which beaux of a more recent date were wont to adopt, when preparing their heads for the admiration of a roomful of company. But this being of ominous name was, in the days of Addison and Steele, renowned for a certain fierceness of disposition exceedingly unprepossessing in the eyes of a quiet humdrum *paterfamilias*, who neither desired to maintain his wife's, or daughter's, honour at the point of the sword, nor to continue at peace upon condition of its ruin. The element of recklessness—daredevilry—mercurialness—fastness—and so forth, which is found in the composition of every branch of the family, predominated consummately in a young blood, and branded him with a mark which was peculiarly his own, and which in his descendants is nearly worn out by the corrosion of time and social changes; for which heaven be praised.

Now the next creature who appeared was called indiscriminately by the old term Coxcomb, or Fop. He stood one remove from the Blood in respect of the mischievousness of his temper, and had ingrained in his constitution still stronger characteristics of the ape, to supply what was lost in those of the tiger. When, soon after the great naval victory of 1706, the Ramillies wig came into vogue, it must have afforded some comfort to him that its long tail, growing from the nape of the wearer's neck down to his middle, conclusively settled all doubts as to the true position occupied by his species in the kingdom of animal nature; for this appendage was the development of what, though hardly human, is unquestionably attached to both ape and tiger in quite another place. And there was, too, about the coxcomb of this era an empty-headedness, accompanied by the most imperturbable self-satisfaction, which proved, it seems, painfully *provocative* of the disdain and anger of his superiors.

all futile though they were. The "fellow" who is "loud and talkative," "full of insipid life and laughter," "noise and flutter," whose feathers are "lace and embroidery," whose "legacies" are "mortgages, diseases, and settlements," has over and over again been spoken of as the most "phantastical" of all characters, the most "contemptible" of all things, and the most unaccountable of all puerilities. But the pretty gentleman, insensible to every "mixture of scorn and ridicule," survives the shock, and continues his career. Leo X., in his time, acted as if well aware that no inveterate folly, if the disease of an idiot, is to be cured either by censure or sarcasm; though probably his Holiness cared as little for the evils inflicted by these meretricious weeds, among the general crop of wheat, as he did for vices and creeds as little creditable to his priesthood. He was a great sneerer, and biography tells us that nothing in human nature amused him more than a fop. "Fools, buffoons, humorists, and coxcombs," were his delight—his study was in them day and night, and they were very constantly in his study. A new fool never failed to gain access to the private closet, albeit an old friend, or a creditor for gratitude, might write and rap until his fingers were sore. This is just what once happened to a suitor who, from an old acquaintance with his Holiness, had learned one foible of his sacred character. The applicant was at once a priest and a wag, and in the end succeeded in his object by the following piece of ingenuity. Having retired from Rome to equip himself without observation for the adventure he had resolved on, the reverend gentleman returned with all the surroundings and belongings of the most finished fop. His equipage, his retinue, and his own person, assumed all the glitter and splendour of the utmost extravagance of fashion. None who knew the Pope, and had any desire to continue in his favour, failed to see or avail himself of the opportunity afforded by the presence of the exquisite stranger in the courts of the Vatican. In short, ministers, courtiers, and cardinals were as anxious to present him to the Holy Father, as ever the Holy Father could have been to receive him. It is superfluous to add, that the expedient entirely answered, and that though the artist had to confess his trick ere its object could take effect, the same cleverness which devised and performed it protected its inventor from that punishment which Leo was always backward to inflict upon talent. But to return.

In the earlier part of the Georgian period, when the Beau first came in, the hair, or rather the wig, grew to be a sure criterion of a man's calling, style, or pretensions; the various professions, or those fashionables without any, being all accommodated with wigs bespeaking the exact qualifications claimed by each. The bobs, major and minor, were the most usual; whilst the wild, scampish devotees of pleasure invariably and with one accord sported the scratch. Sporting, horsey young men were equally proclaimed by the Jehu's jemmy, which protected the delicate brains of all those, and only those, whose thoughts and talents were engrossed by traps and horseflesh. Oliver Goldsmith

often mentions this richly-laced adept in artificialness, whose addiction to finery seems to have gone a step even beyond the excesses of his progenitors. Goldsmith considers him, anthropologically, a true though rare variety of civilised men; and being a naturalist, the Doctor's opinion is entitled to some weight. In sex he allowed him to be masculine, of which the creature's partiality to women is probably some conclusive evidence; for while such a taste would hardly have been natural to an animal strictly of the feminine gender, one of another order would have failed in winning that encouragement in which the daughters of Eve were never wanting towards him.

Beaux, however, were not unexceptionably so inane as one might expect to find them from their parentage and education. There appeared now and then signs of improvement. The unutterable King of Fashion, who flourished at Bath, the *arbiter elegantiarum* of his age—Beau Nash—must be reckoned one of these; and although, apart from foppery, he was distinguished rather by the qualities of his heart than for any of those smart attributes of the head which have far more commonly redeemed the insipidity of a recent school, his idiosyncrasy is, on that very account, the more noteworthy. Without disparagement to individuals, dead or living, we scarce know whether any member of the whole family, before or since, ever associated with the primary organ of physical life any other use than the propulsion of their blood; and if this be so, Richard Nash, notwithstanding his secrets may have lain neglected, should be regarded as a discoverer in natural philosophy. But before we speak of his virtues, here are a few words about his follies.

Those who know nothing of Bath but from a survey of its modern aspect can never realise the halcyon days of its magnificence, when fashion peopled it with the sickly and the gay, the aged and the young, some 150 years ago. We must become historical or archæological before we can do justice to that glorious past. There was "a mort o' merry-making" at that time; though, as invalids had always divided with pleasure-seekers the care of humane Mr. Nash, "not a fiddle or a card after eleven" (as Fag, in the *Rivals*, querulously observes), was ever to be found from one end of the place to the other. All this gay population, sound and sickly, were brought together in a town which, for beauty and convenience, was as inferior to the one reared, out of the colite quarries of the neighbourhood, by the genius of the two Woods, as it is possible to conceive. Those abodes of a century and a half ago, contrasted with the improvements of later years, impress us with no sensations but those of dulness and gloom. Saucy in the possession of fresh beauties, we wonder how poor souls were once content and happy to parade their persons, and recover from their maladies—how they were able to shake off their gout and rheumatism—in such damp and shady-looking localities as those to which the green grass of desertion certainly has since added an adventitious air of desolation.

Cut them and despise them as we will, there is nevertheless one monument of the past which the citizens preserve with pains, and which it were barbarous for any to behold, untouched by emotions of reverence and tender concern,—the house of Nash; a mean, wretched-looking structure as it now stands, to be sure, and continually put in tremors by the fuss and clatter of the adjoining play-house, but yet formerly the home of so much fantastic elegance—the awful seat of a power whence issued mandates so absolute and unavoidable that royalty itself felt bound to obey them. We had rather this relic had abutted on the Assembly Rooms, and so have severed our associations from a department of fashionable recreation which was only a subordinate branch of the Beau's administration; but, since facts are as stubborn as figures, we accept the undoubted tradition, and turn the less reluctantly from the shell to the egg, or—as it was once said (atrociously) of a military hero—from the husk to the colonel.

Nothing ever came up to Nash in the parade and effrontery with which he carried on his game, and no despot demanding the abject homage of his fellows, received it more unreservedly. He was covered with a plumage of lace and embroidery. A noted Polish buck in the circle of Walpole's acquaintance, has been represented as usually bedecked in his favourite "sky-blue watered tabby coat, with gold button-holes, and a magnificent *gold waistcoat*," and to have driven to Vauxhall, attended by footmen dressed in liveries which no eyes could behold without blinking. But Beau Nash despised so shabby a display, and would have blushed, no doubt, to have led the ton at Bath with splendours so inadequate. And having acquiesced in the style and title of King of Bath, no marvel he should have assumed those externals from which all royalty derives such large assistance. See him glittering like the rainbow, shining in jewels like the stars of heaven. Upon his head he wears an ornament peculiarly his own—a white cocked hat, embellished with a plume of the same spotless purity. And how does he go? In a chariot with six grays, with outriders both in van and rear, and esquires blowing French horns. All salute him as he passes; and once within the walls, where his canons are more especially in force, duchesses bow humbly to his decisions; a princess of the blood is denied a dance. That tasteless veil must be laid aside. The royal Amelia must cease her tripping, for eleven has struck; and as punctually as a ghost, when the crowing cock sounds "the trumpet of the morn," gathers himself up and dissolves into thin air, so all—of whatever rank or degree—now take to their chairs and depart. And Beau Nash, with his white cocked hat and six grays, departs likewise. But enough. A word about the charity which warmed his kind heart, and we will pursue our subject.

Nash was always in debt, and always an object of gratitude. When in funds, he gave; when poor, he gave; when utterly exhausted and in circumstances of extreme distress, he gave of the little he had left to divide with others. When money was not plentiful, which it seldom is

in the pocket of a gamester, he had still time and labour to bestow, and by these means he contrived to wipe off many follies and vices which would otherwise have disfigured his memory. The establishment of a hospital for the sick and indigent was the chief of his many good works. Speak gently of the departed Bean, for many still bless the heart which beat beneath so much tinsel.

How difficult is it to hit the almost undefined line which separates the very fine gentleman from the noodle! Rash beyond sanity is it to personate the one, unless prepared to be crushed by the contumely heaped upon the other. Vast and peculiar natural endowments only could make the experiment safe. Chesterfield tried it, for in his eyes it was worth the risk. His success will be variously estimated by those who have more or less sympathy for his moral theories, and the part he acted in the world. Now Chesterfield escaped being either a beau or an exquisite, though the escape was a narrow one. An exquisite was hardly a thing of his day; it came forth somewhat later. A Blood, as we have seen, was a rakish, tigerish, sad dog, on its good behaviour only in the presence of cold steel; whilst the coxcomb, though milder and more mannerly, was at best but a vain, impudent, empty trifler. And the Bean had a love of show and notoriety, a *loudness* about him, which, though it might have matched with the general manners of his age, would, both in the judgment of the polished earl and in that of 1866, be thought vulgar and half-bred. Now we take it that this fastidiousness in the art of playing a character which, after all, is of very dubious taste, originated in the Exquisite. So far he elevated the tone of foppishness to a pitch which, as it stood beyond the stretch of his predecessors, has become a sort of bob-cherry to the ambition of his posterity, who have been coveting and jumping at it ever since with very moderate results. Chesterfield had both the weakness of a dandy and the wisdom of a wit; qualities not capable, in him at least, of independent action, but commingled so as to temper each other. Some of the confessions with which he favours us, whilst they show his superiority, show likewise his slavishness to the common propensities of those whose example he imitated, though he despised their minds. The frailties and vices of puppyism were less dreaded than the tremendous reproaches of pedantry. How the poor man choked and guzzled with tobacco and wine, by way of profitably employing the intervals between academic studies, to convince those about him that his head was not stuffed wholly with classic and mathematical lore; for this found no entrance among the circle he so much admired, or if ever admitted, all were forbidden, upon pain of a lost reputation, to give any evidence of the unsuspected fact. The nausea of tobacco and the fever of wine he manfully endured. He dallied with dice and cards, though as a dabbler in these black arts he abhorred them, until familiarity begat a passion so strong that its dominion stuck to him through life. But as chroniclers of the peculiarities of sweldom, we

would deal graciously with the courtly exquisite who, if an exquisite at all, is deserving of our warmest gratitude for fostering some cultivation of intellect among the race to which he was allied. One *mot*, not well known, we may cite. It is illustrative of the growth of that better school of dandyism which, though now, alas! quite extinct, succeeded to the mere poodles with which the world had been hitherto amused. In those days, as in these, we had our two opera-houses, one in the Haymarket, and the other in Lincoln's Inn Fields; and the rivalry between them was fierce. At the moment to which we refer, the Court patronised the former establishment, while the favours of the aristocracy were contradistinctively showered on the latter. Here was Chesterfield newly arrived from just peeping in upon the good people who went with royalty. "And who was there?" asked a friend, curiously anxious to compare the prosperity of the two establishments. "Nobody," replied the man of fashion, "but the king and queen; and as I thought they might be talking business, I stole away." This same king was the "homely George," whom the great professor of the art of pleasing had endeavoured, so loyally and so unsuccessfully, to work up into a presentable shape.

There was one special weapon used by the Exquisite, with which he won, as he believed, much of his way in the world; this was the snuff-box. O modish bauble! replete to overflowing, not only with pulverised tobacco to stimulate jaded olfactories, couldst thou address our ears as thou dost our noses, how much wouldst thou have to tell of those coveted secrets which must have dropt so often beneath thy richly-enamelled lid! Confidential and silent attendant upon the great and powerful, upon lovers, statesmen, students, divines, prattlers, whisperers, worldlings! who does not envy thee the opportunities thou didst once enjoy of seeing, hearing, knowing, what the vulgar are left only to guess! Cabinet secrets, religious conferences, domestic brawls, drawing-room gossip,—how much of these hast thou been privy to! Privileged toy of fashionable dalliance! one would fain hear thee speak out, though misery and mischief well might spread through every court and home, if only a tithe of all thou hast heard and witnessed were revealed. Verily the evils which escaped from the deadly box of Pandora foreshadowed but faintly the troubles which any snuff-box in Europe could let loose upon the now blissful children of ignorance.

The Dandy, so nearly allied to the Exquisite, was, however, no sniveller. He was an importation; an exotic, smuggled over from abroad, to give variety to the diversion afforded us by the exquisite. The most distinctive characteristic of this modern light of fashion—so modern that we see him glimmering still among the remnants of gay life, was unquestionably the supreme importance he attached to his knight of the needle, to whom he contentedly surrendered the credit of those conquests which cost him so little. The satisfaction with which

a man performs the office of a block, or lay-figure, upon which the quality of his tailor's goods, and his skill in fitting a given shape, are displayed, it is not easy to understand. It arises probably from that sublime exaltation of mind which derives all real enjoyment from abstraction, or has so profound a contempt for the common realities of life, that to imitate the very tub of Diogenes is counted a nobler aspiration than to imitate even Diogenes himself. In place of the snuff-box, the pure dandy carried only an eye-glass, and with this destructive arm dexterously levelled, he went about murderously from place to place, and from person to person, in a misty sort of indifference as to where he was, or who were his victims among the crowds with whom he daily and habitually consorted. It has been remarked of him, that though "fashioned so divinely," he was (by the experienced) "worshipped from afar." Upon the whole, the dandy may be classed as an intermediate link between the exquisite and our contemporary, the swell, and his creation assigned to the immortal Brummel. And this leads us to animadvert upon the unpardonable looseness of phraseology which unscientific persons have applied to the species Fine Gentleman. We hear every fine gentleman indifferently described as a Beau. Exquisites, dandies, and swells are unlearnedly designated by the general term, as if there were no solid difference between Nash, Brummel, and the pretty, long-whiskered fellows whom we had amongst us last June, and who we trust may live through the winter. But beau is a convenient term for popular purposes, and has often been used generically for the miscellaneous tribe. Thus: "Homer tells us the blood of the gods is not real blood, but only something like it; so we found (after dissection) that the brain of a *beau* is not a real brain, but only something like it." And speaking of the same subject by the same expression, "beau," the dissector proceeds in this way: "The *os cribriforme* was exceedingly stuffed and in some places damaged with snuff;" which shows, therefore, that the creature must have been by rights an exquisite, or rather, taking into consideration the proof of its habits as further explained in the next paragraph, we should say he merged upon dandyism. "We did not find any thing very remarkable in the eye, saving only that the *musculi amatoriæ*, or, as we translate it into English, the ogling muscles, were very much worn and decayed with use;" which might be a consequence partly of that practice with a glass, which we have mentioned as the very delight of a true dandy. (See *The Spectator*, No. 275.) And as a beau is defined by Dr. Johnson (see dictionary), to be "a man of dress," and all the varieties of true gentleman are essentially very careful to deck their persons, perhaps this term has been thought a legitimate one to individualise any single specimen. But we grow impatient. We feel we are in presence of a rising orb. The dandy of fifty years since, or if you will, the beau, turns pale, and up springs the great social luminary which sheds its dazzling beams upon the

very paths of our daily life, in all the glory of turgid perfection. His honours are divine, for this Zabian world of fashion worships the new meteor.

The Swell! wonderful offspring of the most intricate art! Conscious of his own superlative excellence, and freezingly indifferent to the gibes of vulgar ridicule, see how stately he threads his way through the mazes of observant crowds, and admiring thronged assemblies! There are two well-defined varieties of the Swell which we must remark almost every day of our lives: the soft fragile creature, upon whom the lightest breeze seems to fall with a too ungentle force; and the defiant swell, whose haughty frowns and devouring looks are apparently borrowed from the aborigines of New Zealand. Fairness, thinness, effeminacy, weakness, together with pearls, turquoise, and silver ornaments, are the specialities of the former; whereas the latter, who is by nature sable-haired, olive-skinned, strong-built, and robust, delights in green and red, and never misses an opportunity of introducing in his apparel as many gold bosses, rubies, garnets, horse-shoes, and death's-heads as is consistent with the canons of sweldom; and in this respect sweldom is not niggardly. They have certain family features, however, which are common to both, and without which they would not be swells. No aspirant to either degree would, without whiskers, pass for any thing but a spurious and impudent pretender. It is in vain to commence swellism, if neither nature nor cantharides have bestowed this prerequisite. Besides, the culture of the whiskers supplies the thorough-bred swell with the main business of his life. Shave him from ear to chin, and his occupation is gone. Cover over that inexpressive region of the human countenance with the luxuriance needed, and what with washing, brushing, greasing, perfuming, and stroking, he has enough to do to occupy all those valuable hours when he is not showing-off the fruits of his manipulations in public. Then all swells are, in the elaboration of their most trifling accessories, works of the highest finish. They are stippled all over and in every part, principal or subordinate, like a fine miniature on ivory; and the effect is so artificial and precious, that framing and glazing seems the next thing to be done, though in charity (rather to them than others) we must stop short of hanging them up.

Now, quitting his exterior, let us look to what he has, or rather has not, in him. Not much conversation; not a very rich stock of ideas; not at all a copious vocabulary. Every portionless widow is "a horror;" every penniless maid "a fright;" an ordinary acquaintance "a fellah;" men of fortune "trumps;" a friend who accepts one's bills "a brick;" and those old 'uns who don't, "regular muffs and duffers." What he abhors is "beastly;" what he does not abhor is "jolly;" and what he loves—and he disdains to love any thing else—is himself. And with respect to all the enjoyments of existence he is simply passive. He was never surprised, amused, or contented since he was born. Plea-

sure bore him ; people bore him ; his creditors bore him ; the routine of life bores him ; the weather bores him ; the first day of the week bores him ; the Opera on the last bores him. The only emotion to which he is liable is disgust ; and there is so little heartiness about this, that when he owns to it, it looks only like a remote objection. Then he eats without any signs of relish ; drinks only to remove depression, or create an unnatural sensation, which, when fully obtained, affords no satisfaction ; and there is so little vital distinction between his sleeping and waking hours, that he is conscious of no agreeable refreshment in his slumbers, or pleasurable excitement in the activities which follow. And this is the new meteor, admired with so much devotion by this Zabian world of fashion.

In earlier tribes of the Fine Gentleman, we meet with some industry in their own special vocation, such as gave them certain claims upon the thankfulness of those whose arduous business is the pursuit of pleasure. But not so the Swell. All labour—even the labour of fashionable indolence—is apathetically eschewed by him. He reminds us of that custom among the ancient Jews which required all works of husbandry to be done by the aid of the ox only, the prohibition expressly forbidding this toilsome beast to be yoked with an ass. At the risk of being thought dull and bookish, we cannot refrain from quoting in conclusion a passage from Mandeville, whose keenness of satire was scarcely inferior to that of the Dean of St. Patrick : “ ’Tis the polished outside only,” says he, “ that has the skill and labour of the sculptor to boast of ; what is out of sight is untouched. Would you break the head or cut open the breast to look for the brains or the heart ? you would only show your ignorance and destroy the workmanship. This has often made me compare the virtues of these men to your large China jars : they make a fine show, and are even ornamental to a chimney. One would, by the bulk they appear in, and the value that is set upon them, think they might be very useful ; but look into a thousand of them, and you will find nothing but dust and cobwebs.”



AFRICAN MARTYROLOGY

BY W. WINWOOD READE

THE cholera still bites, but there is no longer any poison in its fangs. We have arrived at the senile stages of the epidemic, and science finds its strength restored. We receive our patients now with a feeling of bland superiority; we smile complacently at weeping relatives, and assure them that Thomas or Jane will be quite well in a few days; while a little time ago we felt inclined to break all the medicine-bottles, burn that excellent work the *British Pharmacopœia*, and abandon the clinical faith in which we had been brought up for the heresies of homœopathy and other new-fangled creeds.

Now that I am able to emancipate myself from the case-book and the bedside, I discover that my cholera-hospital was once a celebrated house; that the Margravine of Anspach resided here; that this region of the West Quay, with its nautical taverns and its common lodging-houses, and its night laughter, and its remarkable natives, who reel in here for diarrhœa-mixture in the small hours, was once the Belgravia of Southampton, then a fashionable watering-place; that the Assembly Rooms and Public Baths were close by; and that George the Third used to be carried past here in a sedan-chair, which is still preserved.

I have often thought of this, as I have paced up and down these dismal wards, which once were brilliant salons. What an emblem of human life! That mansion, with its flirtations, its ambitions, its glories, its intrigues, to have mouldered into this sepulchre of tears and agony and death! I crawl from it into the garden, which is choked with weeds. I lean over the low brick wall, and look upon Southampton Water. It is a great placid bay, flooded with lights from the western sky. There sinks the setting sun, embosomed in a bed of curling clouds, and pouring forth prismatic rays of violet, orange, purple, and pale gold; these fall in patches; each patch is of a different hue; thus floating islands of colour are formed upon the ridged surface of the waves, which, rising and falling, softly intermingling, harmoniously murmuring, creep towards me, and break against the stones beneath the wall, flashing like precious gems, and tossing blossoms of foam into the air.

Between the sun and the water there is a wood-covered shore; the trees are veiled by Glaisher's blue mist. It reminds me of the fog which rises from the hills of Sierra Leone towards the close of day. Indeed all this is not English; it is African. Though in September,

the air is languid and warm ; the sunset has all the magnificence of the tropics. Where in England could you see that pale-green sky or that glorious crimson haze ? The sun goes down ; the dusk deepens ; and my illusion becomes complete. Yes, those walls of shadowy foliage are the mangroves of the boundless swamps ; those black creeping things are the canoes ; I hear the chant of the negroes, and the monotonous beating of the tam-tam, and the voices of the sweet-toned flute. The hemisphere changes : I see the other stars burst forth ; and I feel it again, that invisible miasm which is inhaled with the sunless air, and which makes the blood run so quickly through the veins.

When these fancies seize me, I love to look out on the dark waters, or on the sparkling sky, and to bring back before me scenes from that wild and unknown land. Then I can close my ears to the street-rattle of civilisation ; to the corner tittle-tattle and guess-gossip about Bismark, Napoleon, Garibaldi ; and to the shallow squabbles of priests and professors on the variance between stones and Scripture, and on the nature and origin of gods, monkeys, and men. Ah, well ; this may be an age of steam, but there is a great deal of foul smoke with it and useless noise ! Who has not been tempted at least once in his life to give up our rapid but monotonous railway-life for the excitements of savage solitude ? As a nation we are the slaves of civilisation, with its groove-life of fixed habits, single purposes, and domestic ties ; but we have inherited the nomade instinct from our ancestors, who, both on the Norman and the Saxon side, were rovers of the sea. We display it grotesquely in our Alpine and canoe clubs ; there are men who spend their lives in climbing mountains, simply to climb ; and there are some who have spent their lives in hunting out the sources of great rivers. It is easy to sneer at such infatuations ; but they are symbolical of the two highest qualities in man's nature,—of that aspiration to rise which is the spirit of human progress ; of that anxiety to search which is the germ of all our science and philosophy. We display it more finely in our adoration of those men who have devoted themselves to stern and splendid enterprise ; who, the knights errant of a new chivalry, have embarked in a crusade of which Bokhara or Timbuctoo is the Jerusalem ; or who exhaust their lives in attempting to solve some problem of geography. Our country has produced more explorers than all the other countries of the world put together. We have only just begun to give them titles and orders ; but we have long crowned them with laurels, and crowded to their feet. When a great traveller enters a London drawing-room there are more rustling of flowers, and whispers behind fans, than welcome the novelist or even the poet.

But there is a dark side to all this ; and young travellers should be reminded how few there are who come out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death into the paradise of fame. When I go back into the big bare room in which I sleep (it was once perhaps the state-chamber

f the Margravine), I take from my portfolio a bundle of old letters. They bear the signatures of Clapperton, Oudney, and Ritchie. These men were famous once; a nation thought of them. What are they now? Their bones lie in Africa; and their memories have faded from the minds of men.

These letters were picked up at a book-stall, very cheap. To autograph-mongers they are worthless, I suppose; although there is a rage for autographs just now. Here is one dated *Kuka*, a town on the borders of Lake Tchad, in the very heart of Africa. The writer and his companions were the first to reach it; but who cares for that now? Yet these faint uncertain characters, scrawled perhaps with a reed cut by the teeth of a marabout into a pen, and dipped in the dark juices of a plant; carried in a turban across the Great Desert, through terrible dangers and by unknown paths, must have been devoured by John Barrow, to whom they are addressed, and read aloud no doubt in fashionable and scientific circles. It is sad to read the hopes and resolutions of those who were unable to achieve the object which they had in view, and who yet earned some reputation in their day. It is sadder still to read letters (and I have one here) from those whose names are utterly unknown because they died too soon. "*If to obtain my purpose,*" writes this unfortunate, "*I can only travel as some one's slave, I shall gladly do so; for I feel that there is no such thing as retreat:—en avant! and trust to fortune.*"

Under the heading which I have chosen as the text of this essay I could write a volume with ease; the materials are so abundant. I could write a chapter on the martyrology of those Portuguese Jesuits and Italian Capuchins who throughout two centuries sent band after band of chaste and noble men into the negro empire of Congo, and into the great city of San Paolo de Loanda, to preach and to perish with the words of the Gospel in their mouths and with the crucifix in their hands. I could write a chapter on the martyrology of the middle passage, which is extinct upon the sea, but which still exists on land—the Sahara its ocean, the caravan its ship. I could write a chapter upon L.E.L.; and I could write a chapter on the martyrology of our soldiers and sailors, who are now dying on those pestilent coasts by hundreds every year. At present I shall write on the martyrology of African travellers, especially of those who flourished in what I shall call the *Niger period* of African exploration.

Towards the end of the last century the popular passion for adventure and discovery had been excited by the exploits of Captain Cook. England looked around her for fresh worlds. She found that within the continent of Africa there was (and there is) a continent which was entirely unknown. In some maps, it is true, the centre space was profusely covered with the names of provinces and towns; mountains and rivers and lakes were laid down with as much pretence to precision as *if they had been surveyed*; but in others this space was left blank.

Nothing, in fact, was known of these towns and these rivers but their names, and those had been derived by ancient and modern geographers merely from tradition and report. This vast continent, this unseen world, was protected, like the garden of the Hesperides, by terrible dragons: on the western side by immense marshes and by jealous natives; on the eastern side by a huge desert of sand. It was known, however, that this desert was crossed once or twice a year by Moorish traders, and that they brought back from the interior ostrich-feathers, slaves, and gold. It was known that a river navigable by large vessels rolled through those regions, and on its banks rumour placed the city of Timbuctoo; the roofs of its houses were of gold, and the natives wore ornaments of iron (as their most precious metal) on their fingers and in their ears. Such fanciful tales were not universally believed; but no one doubted that Timbuctoo was the commercial emporium of a rich country, and that of this country the Niger was the commercial highway. But what became of that river? Its outlet was unknown. The more that scholars studied Ptolemy and Pliny, Strabo and Pomponius Mela, among the ancient geographers; or Abulfeda and Edrisi among the Arabians; or Delisle and D'Anville among the moderns, the more they were perplexed. The Niger was described as flowing from east to west and from west to east, and as ending its course in the Sea of Darkness, in the Great Water, in a large inland lake; while in this passage from Æschylus some enthusiasts discovered a prophecy and a promise:

" Seek

A land far distant, where the tawny race
Dwell near the fountains of the sun, and where
The Nigris pours his dusky waters; wind
Along his banks till thou shalt reach the fall
Where from the mountains with papyrus crown'd
The venerable Nile impetuous pours
His headlong torrent; he shall guide thy steps
To those irriguous plains whose triple sides
His arms surround: there have the Fates decreed
Thee and thy sons to form the lengthen'd line."

This supposition, that the Niger was a continuation of the Nile, was firmly believed in by the Moors who traded to Timbuctoo. Clapperton, in one of the letters which I have before me, writes from Mourzuk:

"We cannot form the least conjecture about the Niger. You know as much about it as we do. The general opinion is that it ends in the Nile, to the south of Darfur. . . . But I give very little credit in determining the course of a river navigable only in some parts, and winding in various directions. The Moors travel far certainly, but it is generally in a beaten track; and if you ask them their reasons for believing that such a river runs into another or joins it, they can give no other than that they think so, or that they have been told so."

In 1788 the African Association was formed to settle this question. It was splendidly supported. There was something novel in the idea of searching for the mouth of a river instead of for its source. This

attracted the general public; while the scholars looked with interest upon the project of exploration as a commentary upon Ptolemy; the merchants as a means of throwing open a continent to commerce; the philanthropists entertained hopes of thus penetrating to the centres of paganism and the slave-trade; and there were, perhaps, some politicians who thought that another Indian empire might be founded between the Sahara and the Atlantic Ocean. Sir Joseph Banks was the leading spirit of the association; Mr. Bryan Edwards was its secretary; Major Rennell was to be its geographer. All that they now wanted were missionaries; and they had not long to wait. The first who presented himself was an American named Ledyard. He had passed several years among the Red Indians; he had sailed round the world with Captain Cook as corporal of marines; and he had just returned from the wilds of Tartary. Sir Joseph Banks asked him if he would undertake the journey which the committee had projected, namely, across Africa at its extreme width from east to west, in the supposed latitude of the Niger. He said that he would go. When asked when he would be ready to start, he said, "To-morrow morning."

On the morning of his departure he said: "I am accustomed to hardships; I have known both hunger and nakedness to the utmost extremity of human suffering; I have known what it is to have food given me as charity to a madman; and I have at times been obliged to shelter myself under the miseries of that character to avoid a heavier calamity. My distresses have been greater than I have ever owned, or ever will own, to any man. Such evils are terrible to bear; but they have never yet had force to turn me from my purpose. If I live, I will faithfully perform in its utmost extent my engagement to this society; and if I perish in the attempt, my honour will still be safe, for death cancels all bonds."

On arriving at Cairo he examined the caravan merchants, as Herodotus did before him, and obtained much valuable information from them. But his own caravan was delayed month after month; he saw not only precious time, but still more precious money, without which nothing can be done in Africa, gliding from his hands, and he fretted himself into a bilious fever, of which he died.

Mr. Lucas was the next missionary. He travelled to Fezzan, an oasis in the Sahara, but was unable to proceed farther. The association began to suspect that they were working from the wrong side of the continent, and Major Houghton was sent inland from the Gambia. He died in the interior, whether by assassination or disease is not known.

The next volunteer obtained the most remarkable and romantic reputation that has ever been earned by man. His name has been familiar since childhood to all our lips and ears; but few of the present generation have read his simple and fascinating book, which is to be found in the library of almost every country house, but which seldom appears in a bookseller's list, and which a Londoner must look for in

the British Museum, or the Geographical Library in Whitehall Place. Mr. Mungo Park was a native of Scotland, and was recommended to the association by the President of the Royal Society. He had not travelled, except to the East Indies as a ship's surgeon; but having passed a kind of examination in astronomy, geography, and natural history, he was sent out to the Gambia, which he reached in June 1795. He remained there till December studying the native languages. An opportunity then occurring, he stole into the interior, and on July 21, 1796, after many hardships and adventures, he knelt on the banks of the Niger to drink of its waters, and to offer up thanks to God. He was at Segon, a large and thriving city; the great river was before him, glittering in the morning sun, covered with canoes, and flowing *from the ocean* in an easterly direction. But in the midst of his triumph he was also in the midst of trouble. He was a vagabond in the land. A heavy rain fell, and he was cowering under a tree, when a good-natured negress took compassion on him, and invited him into her hut. She gave him some broiled fish to eat, and a mat to sleep upon; and as she sat round him with her girls she began to sing, the girls clapping their hands softly and joining in the chorus, which was as mournful as a wail. These were the words which they sang, and which made the tears come into his eyes :

"The winds roared, and the rain fell. The poor white man, faint and weary, came and sat under our tree. He has no mother to bring him milk, no wife to grind his corn. *Chorus*: Let us pity the white man; no mother has he to bring him milk, no wife to grind his corn."

And his triumph even was not complete. Although he stood upon the banks of this river which no European eye had seen before; although he followed it, at the peril of his life, to some distance, he was no nearer the solution of the great enigma. The Mandingo and Moorish traders could only tell him in vague terms that it flowed *towards the rising sun to the end of the world*. He returned to England, as Speke did the other day, having performed a prodigy of travel, but to excite anew rather than to satisfy the inquiries of geographers.

During his absence the association had not been idle. Friedrich Hornemann had come to them with a letter from Professor Blumenbach. This young German had patience, enthusiasm, and a powerful constitution. He was a proficient in natural history and in the Arabic language. He was sent to the north of Africa, adopted the disguise of a Mussulman, travelled to Mourzuk, the capital of Fezzan, took the caravan to Bornou, and was never heard of again.

Mr. Nicholls went to Calabar, actually in the delta of the Niger, one of the most unhealthy rivers on that unhealthy coast. He died of fever before he was able to penetrate into the interior.

Roentgen, another protégé of Blumenbach, was sent to Morocco, from which country caravans go annually to Timbuctoo; he also adopted the Mussulman disguise, and was murdered close to Mogadore.

Burckhardt came over to England to offer his services to the association. It is not generally known that his extraordinary journeys to Mecca and Medina, which will render his name immortal, were mere trips of preparation for a great African journey in search of the Niger's mouth. He died, like Ledyard, while waiting for a caravan.

Mr. Park having realised a large sum of money by his book, owing to its great success and to the liberality of his publisher Mr. Nicholl of Pall Mall, and having married a young and pretty wife, declined the command of a government expedition to explore the interior of New Holland, and retired into Scotland. He practised as a surgeon for some time at Hawick; but, disgusted with the drudgeries of his profession, he went to live at his native cottage on the river Yarrow. Here (in 1804) he became the neighbour and acquaintance of Sir Walter Scott. They soon became much attached to each other. Park used to relate to the great writer adventures which he had been too modest to print in his book. One day Scott found him standing on the banks of the Yarrow plunging stone after stone into the water, and waiting anxiously for the bubbles to appear on the surface. "This appears but an idle amusement for one who has seen such stirring adventure," said Scott. "Not so idle, perhaps, as you suppose," replied Park. "This was the manner in which I used to ascertain the depth of a river in Africa before I ventured to cross it; judging whether the attempt would be safe by the time the bubble of air took to ascend." Scott conjectured from this that he intended to go on a second expedition; and he was right. A Latin poet has sung of his mistress that he hated her, and yet that he loved her; and that though his passions were mingled, his slavery was always fixed. So this horrible Africa can attract us always when we have once been encircled by her fiery arms, and have felt her poisoned breath. This applies not only to great travellers, but to all who have been there. "I have tried all my life," said an old French trader once to me, "to escape from Africa, but I find that I cannot—*et toujours en maudissant ce vilain pays on y revient toujours.*"

It is only just to say that Park's temptation was of no ordinary kind. The Government had offered him the command of an expedition, and he had sent in a memorial containing his plan of action. Since his return from Africa he had met a Mr. Maxwell, who was a trader in the Congo. This river at certain seasons of the year pours out an immense body of water into the sea. I have passed by its mouth, out of sight of land, and have found the water round me fresh. It is also a fact that the Congo is swollen during the dry season, which proves that those waters must come from some distant country. The source of these floods has never yet been discovered: it is probably to be found in some great lake at the back of the Gaboon. But Park concluded that the Niger and the Congo were the same; and the scheme which he devised was this: to penetrate to the Niger by his old route; to build boats upon its banks; and to descend the river to its mouth.

Had he been able to carry out this project, as he almost did, he would have completed his discovery; only he would have found himself in the Bight of Benin, instead of in the South Atlantic.

But the fate of that expedition is well known. Owing to the delays of the Government, he arrived in Africa at the wrong time of year. He was obliged to start in the rainy season. When he *once more saw the Niger rolling its immense stream along the plain*, only seven remained out of a party of thirty-eight. These were all sick—some of them beyond hope. When the boats were ready, only four men besides himself were alive; and one of the four had gone mad. But Park's spirit was unsubdued. "I shall set sail to the east," he wrote to Lord Camden, "with the fixed resolution to discover the termination of the Niger, or perish in the attempt. Though all the Europeans who are with me should die, and though I were myself half-dead, I would still persevere; and if I could not succeed in the object of my journey, I would at least die in the Niger." He did die in the Niger. He set sail in November 1805. It was not till 1811 that his fate was known. He had been obliged to fight his way down the Niger. In the Haoussa country he had been attacked, in a narrow part of the river, from the shores. He defended himself for a long time; then, clasping one of his companions in his arms, he sprang into the river and was drowned.

This story, the particulars of which are dubious, was disbelieved at the time. People still clung to the hope that he had been kept a prisoner in the interior. But these hopes passed away. His son went to look for him, and also died.

The Government, which represented a people slow to act, but obstinate to yield, now sent out a double expedition, equipped with care and at great expense. A vessel was sent to ascend the Congo, under Captain Tuckey; a corps of explorers was sent, under Major Peddie, to descend the Niger. It was hoped that they would meet in Central Africa; but the Yellala cataracts opposed a barrier to navigation in the Congo, and the naval expedition made an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate into the interior by land. The end of it was, that Captain Tuckey died; that Dr. Smith, the botanist, died; that Mr. Cranch, the naturalist, died; that Mr. Tudor, the comparative anatomist, died; that Mr. Galwey, a friend of the captain, died; and that many of the crew died.

The other expedition was not more fortunate. Major Peddie died first. Captain Campbell took the command, and was driven back from the interior by the natives, and died; Lieutenant Stokoe also died.

I am sickened of writing this catalogue of epitaphs; but it is not yet done. Ritchie was sent out, and died in Fezzan. Denham, Clapperton, and Oudney penetrated into Bornou. Oudney died; the others returned. Major Laing was assassinated near Timbuctoo, where he had resided for some time.

A German named Reichard had put forward an hypothesis, which

was at first much ridiculed, but afterwards generally adopted by the scientific world, that the Niger emptied itself by several mouths into the Bight of Benin. Captain Clapperton was sent in from that direction, and died. It was reserved for Richard Lander, who had accompanied him as his servant, to strike into the Niger and to follow it down into the sea.

Then an attempt was made to utilise the Niger as a road of commerce, and a fresh list of mortality was opened. Lander was one of the first victims; Dr. Baikie (who died in 1865) the last.

A less gloomy and not less glorious period of African exploration is that of the Nile, which belongs almost exclusively to the present generation. The Geographical Society is as important a body as the African Association. Sir Roderick Murchison is no unworthy successor of Sir Joseph Banks, and has often acted as ambassador from science to the state. The question of the sources of the Nile, as far as public curiosity is concerned, is as fairly settled now as the Niger's mouth is; and the splendid journey of Sir Samuel and Lady Baker surpasses the individual exploits of ancient or of modern times.

With that journey the romantic age of African exploration has probably come to an end. The scientific age should now begin. The mere explorer is not likely to discover any startling novelties in that area which is still left white in the newest maps. The aspirant for travelled honours, instead of wildly hoping for a range of snowy mountains or a new ape, should try to imitate not only Baker and Mungo Park, but Humboldt and Agassiz. He should study medicine, geology, mineralogy, the use of the blow-pipe, and astronomy. It would be too much, of course, to expect Admirable Crichtons to spring up in all directions; but it is not too much to hope that future explorers may become disciples of such men as Darwin, Huxley, and Lyell, and search in strange latitudes for those secrets of nature which men of science wish to know. Explorers, if only for their own sakes, should make themselves acquainted with one at least of the physical sciences. They will find that the great evil of life in Central Africa is not its danger—which to some people is rather agreeable than otherwise—but its monotony. The traveller, when toiling through a huge forest, or when imprisoned in a small canoe, is like one who is shut up in a cell with a fine library of books written in a language that he does not understand, and the illustrations to which only excite his curiosity the more. Before the traveller is spread out the great book of the stars and the clouds and the waters and the trees. He is surrounded by objects which he cannot even describe, because he does not know their names; while, if he knows but one science, or even the alphabet of one science, he can never remain unemployed, and he will discover a fresh species or phenomenon every day.

AN ADVENTUROUS INVESTIGATION

SMITH and I lounged at our ease on the summit of certainly the highest mountain in certainly the smallest island of the United Kingdom. With the family of Smith you are no doubt acquainted, though you may not recognise him as an individual member, that family being so large and widely spread. Are not its representatives to be met with throughout the civilised world? to say nothing of the innumerable units whose names—honoured by the present generation, and assuredly to be revered by posterity—are enshrined in the immortal pages of the *Post-Office Directory* and *Court-Guide*. Nor, verily, is it altogether improbable that the family of Smith may have place and position even in the Loo-Choo Isles, were the mellifluous cognomina of certain of the inhabitants of those delectable spots translated into plain English.

Let some future Kelly look to it!

Meanwhile the astounding fact need only be repeated, that Smith and I lounged at our ease on the summit of the highest mountain.

We were smoking,—I chronicle that simple truth for the special edification of the Anti-tobacco Society,—and smoking at our ease, not having before us the appalling terrors of a conviction and forty shillings to the informer, as so recently offered by the said Society in the most populated part of that free country called Britain.

Serenely puffing our meerschaums, then, we looked out afar on the magnificent prospect; the distant shores of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales being clearly visible beyond the blue expanse, their mightiest mountains uprising to our sight like grim yet guardian giants ever on the watch to record, resent, and repel invasion.

“What a curious thing it is,” said Smith, “to lie on one’s back here and gaze into the unruffled and immeasurable heavens above, especially when—”

But at that moment a little of the ash of his meerschaum blew into his eye, interrupting what would undoubtedly have been a most remarkable observation and a fine poetic flight.

While he and his pocket-handkerchief were striving to extricate the offending dust, “What do you think of this island?” I asked.

“This island!” said Smith. “Well, it’s not so bad. If there were only something to see, I should like it better.”

“You call *this* nothing?” I inquired. “The world spread out before you—interminable land and water, with a nearer prospect most bewitching; mountain and vale, rolling meadow and smooth shore, the most beautiful sun-views and—”

Smith interrupted: “Of course, of course; but there’s no wood.”

"Truly," said I, "the island is not so well wooded as some places; but still there's a little, and the extreme of picturesque about the Bishop's Palace."

"And there's no coal," said Smith.

"Perhaps not," said I. "Yet thereby hangs a tale; for it is asserted on no mean authority that coal *has* been found, though powerful interest and corrupt offers elsewhere hushed up the discovery."

"And the cats have no tails," said Smith.

Observing that I was in no position to dispute his last assertion, with the consciousness of his victory he relented. And, by the way, you may accept it as a truth, that in good-natured disputation about small matters the defeat of an opponent often leads us to meet him more than half-way on the general question. Had I been able to deny Smith's climax about cats, he would have contended with me much longer. Now, towering victorious with his cats, he came to my assistance.

"After all, my dear fellow," said he, "I'm far from denying that this island *has* attractions. Let's see; there's the largest water-wheel in the world, with a geometrical staircase to its top that turns you giddy to ascend; for, by all that's circular! you go round, and round, and round, for all the world like a Pharaoh's serpent."

"And nothing else?" I asked.

"Well, *I've* seen little else," said Smith; "and, bless me, I've been almost every where. Why, I came from Murkytown on Monday, and landed yonder at Dingyport; and I walked about Dingyport all Tuesday; and I came by car yesterday to Lymphmines; and to-day I met you there, and we ascended this mountain, and—"

"And—?" said I.

"And that's all," said Smith.

"My dear fellow," said I, "excuse the freedom of a friend; but you have seen literally nothing of the Tripedal Island. Yours is the common mistake of many visitors. You spend a day at a place, merely sauntering about it, then drive to the next, look round, and think you have exhausted the scenery. Let me tell you that I have visited this Tripedal Island some forty times, always with the object of searching out and examining its attractions; and I am every day ascertaining how incomplete is my knowledge of it. Now, believe me, you cannot do better than stay here another week or two. I'm going south when I leave here, and shall be glad of your company."

"A week or two, sir!" said Smith. "I should be bored to the calibre of a Thames-tunnel. Nay, the strongest constitution couldn't stand it."

"If you want real variety," said I, "this Tripedal Island affords it, doubt as you may. Suppose you make your head-quarters the little village of Emeraldnook, not a mile from the celebrated sound where the Norse Baron's vessel was wrecked in days of old."

"O, bother the Norse Baron!" said Smith. "Haven't you any thing newer?"

"Well, try again," said I. "Suppose you make your head-quarters the little village of Emeraldnook, where—"

"The Norse Baron—" suggested Smith provokingly.

"Where," I continued, "Wilkie Collins introduced Allan Armadale and Midwinter to the wreck of *La Grace de Dieu*, and—"

"Ah!" said Smith, "that's something *like* sense."

"And near to which," I resumed, "you may see the veritable cottage where the lunatic was confined whose shrieks so horrified the Armadales on that terrible night."

"But that's all nonsense, you know," said Smith. "Pooh! the empty creation of a sensation novelist."

"Perhaps so," I quietly said. "But permit me to tell you that I am just here about that matter of lunacy."

"*What!*" cried Smith, dropping his pipe as he leapt to his feet. "I say! come, be quiet!" I believe he thought for the moment I was mad. "No jokes of that sort! I—don't—"

"Here, sit down again," said I, "and I'll tell you."

And after the first surprise he *did* sit down, but preserved a little distance between us.

"And that lunatic in Wilkie Collins' novel *did* exist in some sort?" said Smith.

"Yes."

"And it was you who first found him and made his case known through the *Times*?"

"Yes."

"And you invite me to be your companion in investigating the entire aspect and condition of lunacy in this island?"

"Yes."

"My dear fellow, not for a thousand pounds. And let me dissuade you." Here Smith, with whom I was now descending the mountain, accidentally slipped his right foot into a bog. The occurrence seemed to suggest an idea to him. "Now, hang it!" he cried, "isn't that annoying? But, by Jove! it's suggestive. Look here; if you, alone and single-handed, attempt such a mad thing as exploring the ins and outs of this island, and hunting up the lunatics by night and day, why, you'll get stuck in a bog, or stabbed, or something else as bad or worse."

"Will you go with me?" I asked.

"No!" cried Smith; "not with the power of Russia to back me. One may stand up against *sane* people; but *lunatics*—" Here he stopped and shuddered.

"But is it not a duty to make their sad condition known—which can only be done by personally ascertaining it—and so stir up the public interest to provide remedies for it; to alleviate the misery and neglect of such *poor unfortunates*; to, if possible, ultimately create for

them a proper and commodious asylum, instead of leaving them, as now, to the tender mercies of avaricious relatives, or the brutal treatment of untaught and ignorant 'friends'?"

"It may be so," said Smith; "but *chacun à son goût*; it's not to *mine*. At all events, if you *will* persist in attempting what has never been done before, just take my advice: have half-a-dozen revolvers about you, and double your life-insurance."

So it came to pass that, having obtained Smith's promise not to disclose my intention—as, had it been known at the time, I might have encountered additional obstacles from the more ignorant of the people,—we separated at Dingyport, he sailing homeward, and I remaining in the island to pursue that Adventurous Investigation which I shall now explain in detail.

While touring through the island for literary purposes, I had been struck by the fact that no provision existed for its lunatics, save a castle, wherein only those who had committed crimes were kept. The question, *why* no asylum existed? was invariably answered by the assertion that there were no funds available; that, indeed, it was a matter of £ *s. d.* Not even the *number* of lunatics was known. It was at best a speculative inquiry; and consequently their places, position, and personal treatment were about as little understood as the locality and condition of the Lost Tribes.

Now, I had casually heard of a lunatic whose alleged place of imprisonment was "somewhere on the North-road"—a manner of speech as definite as "somewhere between London and St. Albans." This North-road stretches from the extreme south of the Tripedal Isle almost to the Point of Hurricanes. I was at that time at Christian-tower, in the south; and, with scanty information of the place I wanted, set forth one glorious afternoon in July. I drove deviously towards the picturesque fishing-village of Pollypier, the beautiful bay of Emeraldnook and the gigantic promontory of Blackfrown being visible in front, contrasting strangely. Turning to the right, I reached the North-road, and a mile thence drew rein at the entrance of the insignificant hamlet of Billaballakillavoughey.

There, after cautious inquiry, I found poor Dick—poor lunatic Dick, the case of whose miserable incarceration my friend Smith had alluded to, and which suggested to me the desirability of investigating the whole subject of lunacy in the Tripedal Island.

There he was in his den—a wretched outhouse at the road-angle, united to a cottage. The brick prison harmonised well with the prisoner. Every wind and storm penetrated to its inmost corner, as the blasts of the south drove full into it through an iron-bound window void of glass or other protection. It was a rough night, and the gale shrieked as its cold breath swept northward. I climbed to the window, and called to Dick, and presently a naked man appeared from his dark

corner. The rude hurricane might wrestle its way in; but the small aperture effectually prevented the entrance of any gentle and kindly breeze, much more the warm tenderness of the summer air. And this was he of whom the neighbours spoke as "only Dick the mad-man."

Only Dick! yet a fine well-built young man, worn with confinement, but still sightly and muscular; howbeit his face was colourless, his hair matted, and his eyes sunken. At the age of sixteen, a joking apprentice (so went the story) had appeared before him, dressed in a white sheet, and scared his senses away. And from that time—for more than seventeen years—his relatives had dungeoned him up, being either unwilling or unable to pay the expense of a better place. Built-in for more than seventeen years; bricked up alive, and alone!

The walls of his cow-house were damp and unsightly; a morsel of foul straw varied the squalid monotony of the cold clay floor; and he was nude, save a loose sack, which now and then he threw over his shivering shoulders. I forbear to speak of the horrible condition of the place.

I had been told he was dangerous. I did not find him so. For half an hour I talked with him, his poor attenuated hand in mine; and though, ever and anon, his eye gleamed dangerously, and his long nails seemed about to close on my fingers, a kind but quick word was sufficient to allay the manifestation of excitement. The cottage adjoining was humbly, yet not uncomfortably, furnished; but the door therefrom to his cell had an interlaced fastening of ironwork. No public print had previously cared to make known, nor any private person given to the world, the barest information of poor Dick's condition. In sickness, in tempest, through the wild night, alone; cut off from all gentle sympathy; naked for so extended a series of years; bereft of all that a man requires; denied what even a dog receives; no murderer was ever worse housed. And yet poor Dick had done no wrong. He was not even born so; for the circumstances of a fright deprived him of his right mind. Here was a being with a soul, yet worse treated than a brute; for even a brute has *clean* straw!

"I do not say he is not at times dangerous. What man would *not* be, after so prolonged and miserable an incarceration? The beauty of sunrise has no charms for him; the glory of sunset cannot even cheer his cell; the flood of noonday splendour fails to enliven his pent-house. Not a bird sings to ease his heart; not a green leaf trembles before his sight. From his depth of darkness he can only behold the wind-swept road and the monotony of cloud and sky; without a bed, without clothing, with nothing humane to rest his wearied limbs upon, there he grovels in the night and in the day!" Thus I wrote of this unhappy victim in my letter to the *Times*.

It is almost needless to say that the publication of that letter in the *Times* called forth many expressions of sympathy for the poor

lunatic, and his sad condition was somewhat improved even before his removal to the temporary asylum in which he now is. But the advocacy and relief of *one* case was not sufficient; that stepping-stone suggested the general investigation which I subsequently made, and privately communicated to a British nobleman for his use in the House of Lords, but no detailed narrative of which has ever been printed.

It is not necessary, in this place, to dwell on the theme of my wanderings; suffice it to say that I went forth alone, and for many weeks roamed hither and thither, always on foot, examining every nook and corner of the Tripedal Island, not excepting those wild and mountainous regions which are seldom explored save by the natives themselves. Twice I was benighted far away from any habitations, and had to rough it out as best I could; and on one memorable occasion a poor lunatic (well-meaning, no doubt) charged at me with her sharp kitchen-poker. *Kitchen*, do I say? God help her! she had no kitchen, for her miserable hut contained no second room whatever; but you will hear all about it in due time.

In all, I walked over some five hundred miles of rough country—turning and doubling as I obtained information—and not only in the day, but often at night and very early in the morning, because, you see, many of the unfortunate creatures, having no settled asylum or fixed home, wandered where they would, and could only be met with on the roads.

Thus, once, I remember, just before the break of day, I found a poor idiot asleep in the public grounds at Dingyport (I thought, at the time, on what “public grounds” is he here?), resting at the foot of that obelisk which commemorates the fall of a gallant insular brigadier-general—that noble heart who charged at Inkermann, and died with his face to the foe! And there, reposing on the greensward, all unconscious of a stranger’s presence, was a weary, weather-worn idiot, the captured Russian gun beside him seeming to guard his slumbers!

But the question will naturally force itself upon you: Had nothing been done for the lunatics? Yes, an inquiry had been commenced in former years; but so loosely conducted, and to such little purpose, that (as I have stated) not even the actual number was known at the time of this investigation. Not that the natives of the Tripedal Island are wanting in kindness. High and low, rich and poor, I believe they will compare with any people in that respect; but there had been an absence of method and a remissness in the appointment of qualified persons which stultified the inquiry, and perhaps the great cause of delay was the inability of those in power to agree on broad subjects. We may, now and then, expect anarchy when a body has three feet; but when that tripedal body possesses twenty-four heads (*self-elected*, and claiming for their councils the wisdom of the nation, and a superior knowledge on many subjects to the whole of the Home Upper-House and Lower-

House members altogether), it becomes just possible that errors may at times be made, and, from sheer blatancy, be persevered in, to the general harm!

So I think that the enormous number of Skeleton Keys in the Tripedal Island had so hampered the wards of progress—each purporting to fit better than its fellows—that but little had been done to alleviate the lunatics' condition at the time I visited them; and but for the prompt and wise exertions of the present governor (aided by some gentlemen more sensible than litigious), I think the lunatics might have continued even longer in their too-long sad condition.

But what had previously been done? Let us see.

In a former governor's time the parish-captains of the Tripedal Island were ordered to return the number of lunatics resident in their districts. The returns were not trustworthy. While the number sent by some parishes was too great, the number sent by other parishes was too small. For it was proved that (whether from ignorance, heedlessness, or malice, I know not) certain sane but merely eccentric persons had been reported as lunatics; persons indeed whose peculiarities were not more marked than Sam Johnson's, whose practice was to touch every post he passed by; or Captain Marryat's contractor, who sent a shower of spray over every one he spoke to; or the Sicilian nobleman whose hobby was the formation of impossible animals from the anomalous parts of others.

Thus the little parish of Liseandelle, with an aggregate population of 2500, was said to possess 22 lunatics, or 1 in every 115 persons! a return undoubtedly preposterous when we reflect that the ratio of lunacy in the Tripedal Island is certainly not in excess of England and Wales. The lunacy of England and Wales may in round numbers be set down as 2 per 1000 souls; and yet we may be more exact, avoiding "round numbers;" for, taking the population of England and Wales as 20,061,725, and the number of its lunatics chargeable to the poor-rates as 34,271 (the last returns), we find that the lunatics are as 1 to 585, or 2 in every 1170 persons. Now, the population of the Tripedal Island is 52,252; and a computation of 1 to every 585, or 2 in every 1170, will give us 90 lunatics for the whole, or exactly the same proportion as in England and Wales. And the result of my investigations convinced me of the truth of these figures; for I found 60 lunatics and idiots in the Tripedal Island, visited a dozen others (criminal) in the castle at Christiantower, and heard of 16 more whom I could not encounter, as they were rambling about the roads. The aggregate, then, would be 88; and no doubt some two or three escaped my attention.

Thus, therefore, the return for Liseandelle ought to have been 5 or 6, and it was 22!

I endeavoured to obtain the returns of the parish-captains, but no one could furnish me with a *clue* to them. The only reliable informa-

tion on the subject was that respecting Liseaudelle, and it had casually been given to the islanders at a meeting of the Skeleton Keys. Indeed, the parish-returns seem to have been ordered, made (after a sort), thrown aside, and forgotten.

So uncertain was the knowledge of the people on the subject, that while some persons of position asserted that there were not more than 30 lunatics in the whole of the Tripedal Island, others fixed the number at from 110 to 400!

The truth was that no reliable information existed, and many otherwise intelligent islanders could not distinguish between a lunatic and an eccentric person. Well-meaning as many of the officials might be, it was (to use Stephen's phrase in *Hard Times*) "all a muddle!" The matter had been burked by precedent. For centuries it had lain in abeyance without methodical investigation, almost without consideration whatever. While a poor demented creature roamed the roads at all hours, and was not known to have acted criminally, he was allowed his will, and described to you (in the Tripedal phraseology) as a really sane but eccentric curiosity, and "not wise."

But to counterbalance what might seem a charge of cruel neglect on the part of the people, let me express my belief that it was attributable almost wholly to ignorance, for every one was ready to give a meal to the needy wandering imbeciles. But the most blamable thing was, that in the cases of those lunatics who were kept in confinement, few had been visited by those whose duty it was to inquire after them. A terrible fact, in truth, that lunatics (really so, or *alleged to be so*) were kept closed up in rooms and unseen, unvisited *from year to year* save by their own relatives. In brief, the clergymen of the Tripedal Island neglected their duties. I say this without any hesitation, and am prepared to furnish proofs (but indeed this narrative will sufficiently establish the fact), always excepting a few energetic ministers who did what in them lay; especially one, a thorough Christian, who delights in works of charity, and is not only a persevering spiritual adviser, but does good as far as his limited income will allow. Ah, I wish there were more like him in the Tripedal Island; then would there be fewer such cases as that at Crooked Eye (of which hereafter), where a son had been confined in darkness and dirt for years, unseen, unvisited, by either ecclesiastic or layman; and *that* in the second half of the nineteenth century!*

In a word, through apathy or forgetfulness, the memory of existing cases had fallen into oblivion, and poor demented creatures lay fastened up in cow-houses, stables, or private rooms, as unthought of by the out-

* The object of this article being to show what was the actual state of the lunatics in the Tripedal Island previous to the commencement of an asylum, names of places and people are purposely disguised; but, as a guarantee of good faith, I have placed them in the hands of the Conductor of this Magazine, though not for publication.

side world as though they had no existence, as will be seen when I recite my visit to poor Kate.

Not the slightest provision or protection for the lunatics had been made, save for such as had committed crime, and were imprisoned in the castle of Christiantower; and was it not positively an inducement to commit crime, and so obtain regular fare and shelter?

And thus the evil might have gone on for another century but that the chance exposure of one sad case roused the public feeling from its torpor; and the governor of the Tripedal Island (a gentleman of practical parts, clear-sighted, benevolent, and as resolute as energetic) determined to do every thing in his power for the correction of such pestilential abuses.

And, assuredly, such evils could not be too speedily remedied. Only consider: with lunatics, idiots, and imbeciles wandering about the country at all hours, what security existed for property or person? Besides, in addition to the ill-treatment which real lunatics might receive in the absence of all judicial guardianship, any sane person might have been confined (for selfish purposes), and the case have either remained unknown or escaped active investigation.

But to continue.

After the returns of the parish-captains had been sent in to the then governor (some six years ago), the question of an asylum was talked of. Subsequently an act was drawn up, approved, and became law. This was in 1860-1. But though the said act was printed, for at least *four years* from that time no practical steps were taken towards the erection of an asylum, nor indeed was the *plan* of it agreed upon until the early part of 1864. The act itself provided that the governor and committee of the *Tinwhistle Court* should procure plans and estimates for the proposed asylum, and contract for the purchase of a site; that the lands of the Tripedal Island should be valued in order to assess a proper rate for the maintenance of the institution; that objecting land-proprietors, or occupiers, should have the right of appeal; that, on the completion of the valuation, a rate should be levied sufficient to raise one-half of the estimated cost of the asylum; that, should the assessment prove insufficient, the *Tinwhistle Court* should lay an additional rate equal to one-half of the deficiency; that an estimate of the first year's expenses of the asylum should be made, and a corresponding rate levied and collected; that the asylum, when completed, and all its real and personal property, should be vested in the *Tinwhistle Court*; that the said Court should appoint a committee of management; and other arrangements. Also the act provided for the opening of the asylum; appointed its officers; ordered periodical inspection and annual reports, and included the admission of criminal lunatics. It provided moreover that every constable having knowledge of pauper lunatics should, within three days after obtaining such knowledge, give notice thereof to a justice, who should thereupon require the production

of such lunatics before him within seven days from the first notice being given; that on the certification, by a qualified medical man, of the persons' lunacy and fitness to be taken care of, the justice should at once order the lunatics' admission to the asylum; that all lunatics found at large or cruelly treated by their relatives should be admitted; that all constables neglecting their duties should be fined or otherwise punished; that the person signing a certificate of lunacy should *not* also have the power to sign an order of removal (a wise provision). And then dealt with a variety of other matters: as, for example, the discharge of pauper-lunatics; their delivery to friends; the correction of imperfect medical certificates; the registration of patients; the keeping of a journal; the application of patients' property to their maintenance; the power to distrain on the property of relatives who refused to pay their proportion of expense; the ill-treatment or neglect of patients by officials; the escape of patients through officials' negligence or connivance; the admission of alien lunatics in event of the asylum being more than sufficient for its own unfortunates; the property to be exempt from assessment; the collection and ordering of charitable bequests; and also stipulated that nothing in the said act should be held to repeal or alter the laws of the Tripedal Island against beggars and vagrants. All necessary schedules and forms were attached.

This synopsis of the provisions of the act will show that, in theory at least, it had been well considered.

The entire cost of such an asylum was estimated at 20,000*l.*; and the home-government offered to bear one-half the expense, on condition that it should have the right to send only fifteen patients, the Tripedal Island defraying the other moiety and subsequent cost of maintenance—a very liberal arrangement, one would think, for the Tripedal Island. And yet, in the face of all this, there were cavillings and objections and delays, for the Skeleton Keys have ever been divided in opinion, save on the one subject of their own immaculacy and right to elect themselves without consulting those whom they are supposed to represent.*

However, the *Tinwhistle Court* did at last positively rouse itself, and, October 28th, 1863, went so far as to—order plans! Six architects were on that day instructed to furnish plans and estimates for the proposed asylum, which was to contain one hundred and ten inmates. Four architects responded to the invitation, and the plans sent in were very elaborate.

Time went on, although the warm-hearted and amiable governor of the Tripedal Island certainly did *his* best, as I know from personal observation of his energetic character and readiness to redress what is

* The committal by them, against all law and reason, of a newspaper proprietor to Christiantower Prison for alleged contempt, &c., will not be forgotten; nor how the governor of their island soon *reversed their act of tyranny* and set the prisoner free.

wrong; but the slowness of the Tripeds was chronic. However, on February 8th, 1864, a meeting of the *Timchistle Court* was convened to consider progress, and on that occasion the plans were inspected and the estimates looked into. The latter varied from 14,000*l.* to 22,500*l.* The smallest was favourably entertained. In the subsequent debate his excellency the governor pressed the court to come to an early decision, that a portion of the government-grant might be obtained that year, and the work proceeded with.

A copy of the debates is before me, but need not be given. No one could have better advocated the urgency of the question and the importance of saving time than did the governor, whose sympathies were all with the poor undefended lunatics; and I am pleased to know that several of the speakers were ardent for the work to be commenced. But some of the Skeleton Keys, in the plenitude of their wisdom, presented all the obstacles they could think of. One of them made the formal objection that the *place* where the question was being considered was not strictly the correct one, and claimed the right of the Skeletons to adjourn to their own particular house and consider it there.

I wonder did he reflect that, at the moment of his pertinent speech, there were certain miserable beings in *their* particular houses; for instance, poor Dick in his dark den, and unfortunate Kate in her stable.

Afterwards another gentleman Skeleton (who was good enough to assert his "little brief authority" by denying me an order to visit the criminal lunatics, but which came to nothing, as I subsequently got it over his head in a personal interview with the governor himself) took objection to the proposed asylum because it would be altogether too large, basing his statements on the old exploded theory that "so many of the people to be included were *harmless*." (It might possibly have served him to have been introduced to one of these *harmless* creatures then in Christiantower Castle, who some time before, while unrestrained and unguarded, had harmlessly killed a boy with one blow of an adze.) This same gentleman objected to the expense, and pleaded the limited means of the Tripedal Island, not omitting to understate the number of lunatics, although claiming to know more about them than any body else. However, some others—better informed yet less conceited than his Skeletonship—corrected him pretty smartly; one speaker proving that if the asylum were built to hold ninety inmates instead of one hundred and ten, the saving would but be 550*l.* to the island.

Then the former objector came to his discomfited friend's assistance and urged the needlessness of such an asylum, especially as "they would have to support it hereafter" (as though it were the duty of any body else to do so). He added, with a total absence of information, that the lunatics in the Tripedal Island did not number more than *thirty*; and after bewailing the absence of the asylum which he declined to erect, proposed—what? Well, it almost passes belief; but with a fine regard for the poor confined lunatics themselves, he would have

stultified the asylum altogether, his proposal being "to hire *one or more houses* for A YEAR OR TWO, in order to test the question by seeing how many lunatics *would find their way to them!* and then, having (AFTER A YEAR OR TWO) ascertained the wants of the country, an asylum *might be built!*" But, as I have said, the ardour of the governor communicated itself to others; and despite such and similar objections, the motion was passed that the proposed asylum should be erected.

I believe I am correct in stating that a *majority* of the islanders considered such an asylum quite unnecessary. I do not think the feeling was one of apathy or disregard to human suffering; but the FACTS were imperfectly known to them, owing to the system (or total absence of system) which had so long prevailed. And in a country *without rates* the idea of a rate was most unpalatable. In a word, the question was one of cash, and the farmers could not bear to think of their land being taxed. Some, indeed, would have had the lunatics sent out of the country; but this view was by no means general, as the question of expense again stopped the way.

Now, what was this question of expense? Having all the facts ready to my pen, and this subject of lunacy in the Tripedal Isle never having been made known, in its terrible details, to the British public, let me briefly consider its financial aspect. To have maintained the lunatics in some distant asylum would have been costly in comparison with the expense of their maintenance at home. The charge at an English asylum would probably average 36*l.* per head per annum. Thus, for eighty-five lunatics the yearly charge would have been 3060*l.*; whereas in the Tripedal Isle their maintenance would not be more than one-half that sum.

Take the cost of building and furnishing the insular asylum at 20,000*l.* Our home-government offered to defray one-half of the expense, so the islanders had only 10,000*l.* to provide, and after that the yearly maintenance of the establishment. It was not a very crushing affair after all. The rental of the island may be stated at 220,000*l.* A yearly rate, then, of *fourpence* in the pound, laid for only *three years*, would in that time raise the whole amount of 10,000*l.*, and suffice besides to *repay both the original loan and interest.*

Next, the cost of maintenance. I believe that 1500*l.* per annum would amply suffice to cover the whole expense; but let us be liberal, and say 2000*l.* Well, a mere fraction over *twopence in the pound* would raise the amount. When I think of the horrible condition of the poor wretches whose cases I shall make known in due time,—miserable, naked, ill-treated, incarcerated, or unprotected wandering creatures, guilty of no crime or sin,—that amount of *twopence in the pound* becomes something mighty to consider; for through long, long years it swelled its tiny proportions to a giant's size (I mean in the estimation of the insular Tripeds), and barred all progress. Yea, it was a very Giant Despair, and the place a Doubting Castle; and the only marvel of the

thing is, that the terrible club which struck down all who sought to relieve the poor wretches whom Despair had seized was—a twopenny one!

The causes of lunacy, idiocy, and imbecility in the Tripedal Island may be stated as follows:

1. Marriage between afflicted persons.
2. Fright, the effect of practical joking or misapprehension of facts, as in the sad cases (hereafter to be described) of Dick W. and Fanny C.
3. Intermarriage (very prevalent in parts of the Tripedal Isle).
4. Excessive impressibility, associated with that tendency to superstition which is essentially a part of the Tripedal mind, often confusing superhuman causes with natural effects.
5. Religious fanaticism, ultimately passing into mania, as in the (subsequent) cases of T. C. and J. C.
6. Intemperance.
7. Puerperal fever.

I hasten to my own Adventurous Investigation, and may dismiss all preliminaries by stating that, after the publication of that first sad case in the *Times*, the authorities really did exert themselves; indeed, no one could have done more than his excellency the Governor of the Tripedal Isle—who personally and by letter afforded me all the assistance in his power to ascertain and remedy the cases I sought out.

Pending the erection of a commodious asylum, the authorities have rented a certain mansion on the estate of Chaffgrounds (four miles distant from Dingyport), and converted it into a temporary receptacle for the poor lunatics; but the place is much too small, and being without strong outer walls, affords many facilities for escape. It is only a short time since some of the lunatics evaded their keepers, scaled the walls, and escaped for a period. Very recently I visited this temporary asylum, and inspected every part of it. It is a strange thing to walk into a room whose dozen inmates include a mad murderer or two; but the strangest thing to me was to see and shake hands with my poor Dick, whom I had found in such frightful squalor in his miserable den at Billaballakillavoughey. He remembered me as I talked to him; but it was only the recognition of bodily aspect, his mind being unable to recall the particulars of that first sad interview. As to the asylum now in process of erection, it is expected to be completed a year hence, and will have accommodation for 110 inmates. The temporary building at Chaffgrounds has, as stated, been found to be insufficient in every respect. Although some of the Skeleton Keys were convinced (because they knew nothing about it) that "the whole island did not contain thirty lunatics," there are *at present* forty-nine kept and tended, all pauper or criminal, and several outsiders waiting for admission; and about 50*l.* will shortly be expended in arrangements for them, which will enable twelve more to be accommodated. But, after all, the system is only one of patchwork until the permanent asylum shall be finished, and is a daily proof of the shameful neglect of past years.

There were great difficulties in the way of my Adventurous Investigation. The report of poor Dick's case had been extracted from the *Times* into all the insular newspapers, and thus (and by word of mouth) had penetrated into every nook and corner of the island. I met no man or woman who had not read or heard of it, and I mention this because it was a direct impediment to my inquiries. The presence of a stranger in their island, at a period of the year when no one goes for pleasure, and he without any definite business or commercial luggage, was a thing to excite suspicion; and many persons who were fearful of being written about or made mediums of evidence against others, sheltered themselves under assumed ignorance or profound stolidity. Like Joe in *Bleak House*, they "didn't know nothink." One thing, at least, they did not know: that my purpose was to expose and correct a *system*, and not to injure any individual, or even let his name and place transpire. In many cases my questions for clues had to be put in the most indirect and circumlocutory style, no hint of a lunatic's locality being obtainable until my informant was off his guard. Once my inquiries were met with studied defiance, though the miserable lunatic was within ten yards of me, imprisoned in a dark room and surrounded by foulness. The inmates of that house offered personal violence if I advanced, having the acuteness to know that I possessed no authority. However, I learned all about the wretched creature, and certainly the case (hereafter to be described) was very bad.

But my greatest obstacle was the genuine ignorance of people. Few had cared to know any thing about the unfortunates. Then there were all sorts of wilful misdirections; and frequently, when in the very village, I was told I was farthest from it.

Again, the ignorance of many people multiplied one case into three, as thus: one person would describe *by her maiden name* a lunatic near Rushingwater; another describe her by her *married name*, and inform me that she lived at Beaverbrook; while a third would speak of her by her local byname, and (having once casually met her there) would say that her home was in Herringtown.

Nay, so careless were some persons of names and dates, that Dick's case (published in the month before my visit) was described as having been exposed several years before, while opinions were divided as to his place of confinement—Danestone and Herringtown being alike mentioned, each miles away from the actual place. The "several years before" was evidently a confusion arising out of the story's having been repeated by somebody who had heard it from somebody else, who had not paid attention to the date of the paper. Thus it was no easy task to ascertain even the *number* of lunatics.

One bad case was described to me as leaving nothing to desire, &c. But while the speaker was earnestly trying to delude me, he tripped in his speech, and I saw a falsehood in his averted glance. With two or three cross-questions I speedily satisfied myself that I was right, and

then, by changing my tone and threatening him with exposure, I got at the truth. Yet sometimes I met with brilliant exceptions, and obtained information with little or no trouble.

Another difficulty was, that through malice or ignorance sane people were described as lunatics, and thus much good time was lost in searching out the cases and disproving the assertions.

Occasionally the seriousness of my investigation presented a comic side. When I entered a country inn, the few people there, who were drinking Tripedal ale and chanced to remember me in old times, would instantly stop their conversation and cluster together with the queerest meesiness.

Once an old man was described to me as an incurable maniac, and I found that his mania was simply bad temper when suffering from rheumatism!

Now and then I encountered men and youths who were neither lunatics nor idiots, but simply of weak mind, yet totally unfit to be at large; and I am bold to say that when the permanent asylum is ready they may be instructed to contribute by labour towards their own maintenance.

The only case of an epileptic imbecile which I met with was in the south of the island, at Pollypier; and one of my oldest and most intelligent friends in the village informed me that, when prostrate and insensible after the violence of the convulsions, the poor creature was quickly restored by laying a black silk handkerchief on her face. I think I remember this treatment to have been successfully tried in France.

I have thus brought up the whole subject of Lunacy in the Tripedal Isle to the date of my Adventurous Investigation.

The first case visited by me was even more painful than that of poor Dick, because the subject was a female. I heard of it by a strange chance. While rambling over the base of the mountain on whose summit my friend Smith and I had smoked our pipes, I encountered a rough but not unintelligent farmer's lad. He did not seem to know the exact meaning of "lunatic" or "idiot," but his native sense enabled him dimly to comprehend it; and after a little thought he understood me, but was short of language to express himself. At length he said "he'd heard as there were a Deadhead not far off."

This very singular term appeared to me to be sadly appropriate to the subject. Knowing that the natives generally spoke of demented people as "not wise," I asked him was this Deadhead "wise" or not?

"Not."

Now this was an important accession of power for future inquiries. I had got a new word, sure to be understood by the most ignorant.

"Well, who was this Deadhead? a man or a woman?"

"He didn't know."

"A boy or a girl?"

"He couldn't say."

"Where was she?"

"What *she*?"

"Why, the Deadhead!"

"O ay! He didn't know the name of the place, but there were a big roaring rush of water."

A rush of water seemed to me to typify a waterfall. I kept this information in mind, and started to the nearest cataract, it seeming probable that the boy had most likely heard of some Deadhead in his vicinity. No! At or near that cataract information could not be obtained. I visited another, on the Beaverbrook road, near Smugglers' Bridge. No result! Then I tried about Rushingwater, and still without success. I crossed the country to Glorytints, and still to no purpose.

There was such a tremendous power in that strange word Deadhead, that I determined to employ every means to ascertain the person to whom it applied. Often baffled, but proceeding step by step, I at length got a clue, but not a Triped would show me the way, and the small isolated place was strange to me. At length I found the house itself, and visited the miserable creature in her stable. I may premise that her mother is also insane, and for an act of violence was confined in the criminal ward of the castle.

C. K., the poor Deadhead of the boy's story, lived on the farm of Beelebee, about a mile and a half from the charming little village of Evangelista. The farm itself is of moderate size, and belongs to her uncle, whose family is very numerous. Both he and his wife assured me that it was totally out of their power to pay for the maintenance of their niece in an asylum; and they appeared to me to be plain, honest, not unkind people. However, I have to deal with facts, not suppositions.

Seven years ago, this poor girl, then aged twenty-six, was seduced, became a mother, was deserted by the father of her child, and lost her reason. Her relatives took care of the baby, and confined her in the outhouse (which I shall presently describe), as it was not safe to have her under their own roof. Soon after, she broke away from her place, rushed to the river and plunged in, but was rescued and retaken to Beelebee. Her aunt said that she had frequently endeavoured to obtain admission for her niece into the castle, but to no purpose, as, however violent her niece was, she had never committed an assault on any one, her misery seeming to turn only against herself, and the laws of the Tripedal Isle taking no cognisance of inoffensive lunatics! "If," said the aunt, "a mad creature does no hurt to others, nobody gives her an asylum here; but if she only hits a man with a stick she gets good keeping. There's protection for the guilty lunatics, but there's none nohow for them as has done nobody no hurt." She stated that she had petitioned those in office to obtain the removal of her niece, and named medical men in Herringtown who had signed the certificate of lunacy; but to no purpose.

I requested to see the young woman, and, after momentary hesita-

tion (which evidently gave way to the thought that the expense and trouble of her niece might be saved by her removal), the aunt led me to a stable some twenty yards from the farmhouse. She unpadlocked the door, and I entered.

All kinds of litter lay about, especially in the compartment nearest to the door; worn-out harness, a mouldy horse-collar, some broken straps, a ragged bellyband, a spliced crupper, a disused martingal, the splintered shafts of a wheelbarrow, old sacks and stray wisps of straw, occupied the floor. Overhead was a loft, in which I saw similar refuse. This was the dead lumber; but where was the Deadhead?

She was in the other compartment, which was at first so dark that I could perceive scarcely any thing; but presently my sight became accustomed to the obscurity. Her den had evidently once been tenanted by cows, and its dimensions were about four yards square. There were some few traces of dampness on the walls, and the cold was most perceptible.

My poor miserable Deadhead lay on a bed of straw, and was so completely covered with an old blanket and coat that only her shape could be seen—the shape of a body coiled up. She lay there torpid, as her aunt said, “not caring nothing for nobody.” I thought of her original great trouble, and that if the scoundrel who had so basely betrayed and deserted his victim could have seen her thus, even he might have felt some remorse.

Poor Deadhead! I bent over the heap of clothes and spoke to her. She gave no sign of having heard me. I waited a minute, then gently put back the old blanket and coat from her head and face. She was lying on her left side, one arm outstretched and resting on the straw which was her pillow. The aunt spoke kindly to her. “Now, Kitty, speak to this gentleman.” No reply: but she breathed on heavily and wearily. We raised her in bed—such a bed!—and with a sigh, but no recognition of us, she sat up. I beheld a young woman whose age did not appear to exceed eight-and-twenty years, owing to her wonderfully fair and fine skin. Her head was by no means badly formed, but the face was heavy and its features swollen, though not to repulsiveness. Her dark-brown hair, luxuriant and not coarse, hung in unkempt masses about her face; while a few curls had strayed towards the dimples in her cheeks, which I could not help thinking seemed the last flowers of her blighted girlhood. Poor Kitty! throughout the whole time I was with her she never spoke, only sighed and rolled her head hither and thither, in an exhausted, forlorn way! Once she opened her eyes. They were of the same dark-brown colour as her hair, and the expression of them was singularly intense, appearing indeed to *burn*, and contrasting most strangely with her general apathy and listlessness. That instantaneous gaze was fervid, and then the white eyelids closed in wearied sleep.

The poor girl was clad in her chemise only. I think her relatives

ledge which successive generations of academic youth have displayed, or else have failed to display, within these abodes of examiners and of examinées; and it is not improbable that, should his visit be paid at that season of the year when such apparitions are rife, he may see issuing from the various doors of the quadrangular enclosure certain young men, crest-fallen or exultant in appearance, as the case may be, arrayed in garments of sombre hue, surmounted by the insignia of undergraduateship, and having their necks encircled by a plain white cravat. It will need no unusual powers of perception to guess that these are the identical youths upon whom one portion of his thoughts was bestowed—that they are in fact representatives of the class Young Oxford, as it is technically called, “in the schools.”

A gloomy place, in truth, is this same Schools Quad. Whether it is that the walls are so arranged as to exclude every stray gleam of sunshine, or whether the sun refuses to lend his rays to a spot which has given rise to so many sombre and mysterious legends, it certainly appears to be perpetually wrapped in an almost funereal shade. So constant and so marked is this, that the Schools Quad seems to be avoided by all, except those who are compelled to enter it, as exercising a depressing and unwholesome influence on the mind. “Something ails it.” Within its sunless recesses shouts of juvenile merriment are never heard. The very errand-boy, should he have occasion to pass it, hurries through, looking neither to the right nor left, as he would through a churchyard at night; fearful, perhaps, lest he may be confronted by the melancholy phantoms of the plucked. Even the lightest-hearted and fairest-faced of Oxford’s Commemoration visitors suddenly find a damp thrown over their spirits when they enter the iron gates, in the harsh grating of which despair and disappointment seems clearly to sound. White muslins and sunny looks suit ill with the prevailing gloom of the atmosphere; a few dismal jokes are made, and the place is left.

In one corner of this Schools Quad may be generally found a certain individual known by the name of the “Clerk of the Schools.” Originally he may have been a man of cheerful, happy temperament enough; even now possibly, when he is once removed from those gloomy and depressing precincts, his ominous face may relax into a smile; but when he is on duty he is the personification of pompous melancholy. His talk is not exactly, perhaps, of “graves and worms and epitaphs,” but still of the stony hearts of examiners, and the desperation of the plucked. Indeed, his acquaintance with both these as a class is surprisingly intimate. With a dismal countenance he will tell you, as one of the former of these streams into sight, “Now, that gentleman, sir, plucked, when he examined, four out of eight each day for a week; he did, sir. And as for that gentleman you see coming there,—him with the tall stooping figure and the spectacles,—he’s been the cause of more plucks than any other

examiner in the University!" With a look of mute horror and wonderment you gaze at this monster as he passes by you, without finding, perhaps, in his countenance any signs of a disposition implacably revengeful or severe; in fact, he may seem a gentle-natured, kind-hearted individual enough, judging at least from the visible features of his face; and so, muttering to yourself something about the deceitfulness of appearances and the treachery of cruelty, he passes on. But on the objects of this stony-hearted examinational relentlessness your informant is still more gloomily communicative. A stray undergraduate may wander through while you are standing there, whom, perhaps, the clerk of the schools will salute, with finger uplifted to his hat, in a ruefully respectful manner. "And that, you say, is a student?" "Well, sir," is the answer, "I don't know much about his being that; but he was plucked three times for 'smalls,' five for 'moderations,' and now he's been up twice for his 'greats,' and I don't fancy he'll get through yet awhile." This is said with an air which clearly meant to tell you that the speaker, though not exactly an examiner himself, is in the habit of at least being their bosom confidant. These and many other stories of the same kind may be told you by this presiding genius of the Schools Quad—stories and reminiscences to you of so mournful a nature, yet related with such evident gusto, and smacking so strongly of a certain dry humour, that you begin to think that the clerk of the Oxford schools, like the grave-digger in *Hamlet*, can have "no feeling of his business."

But if the visitor to Oxford would see this time-honoured and memorable spot under its most interesting circumstances, he must go there when it has other tenants than its one officiating minister and a few stray passers through. Let him repair thither about five o'clock in the afternoon of a day towards the end of the month of November. For six or eight long hours the schools will have been full of examiners and examinées. For the former it has been a time of weariness, intermingled possibly by occasional disgust; for the latter, of weariness and anxious suspense. Examiners are capable of several divisions. There is the quiet gentlemanly examiner, for instance, who does not care a particle whether his victim gets through or not, who puts every question with a bland, cold, meaningless smile; whose tone seldom varies, and who, whether the replies given are right or wrong, preserves an equally passive indifference, so that the struggling candidate, when he is at last dismissed with the conventional "Thank you, that will do," in vain searches into the fathomless face of his inquisitor to discover whether the omens of his success are fair or foul. Secondly, there is the kindly-natured examiner, who tries hard to get his floundering subject well through, who asks his questions in a suggestive way, and who prefers rather to find out what *is* known than what is *not* known; who exhibits disappointment if his best-meant efforts to extract knowledge fail;

and who only utters his *dimittat* in a tone of sincere regret, when every attempt which he has made to help his victim pass through the ordeal has proved unavailing. Lastly, there is the gruff, sour examiner, who regards every candidate as a potential pluck, who sets himself resolutely to misconstrue every answer which is capable of misconstruction, who shakes his head at every word which is uttered by his victim, and who finally asks him whether he knows any thing at all. It is fortunate, however, that instances of this third class are seldom met with. Generally speaking, the Oxford examiner is a gentlemanly pleasant personage enough, and as a class far more unreasonably abused than the lodging-house keeper or the cabman.

We will suppose, then, that the reader takes his station in the Schools Quad at the time above mentioned; that the scenes which have been hinted at have been enacted during the day; that they are now over, and that the examiners at this present moment are consulting together as to who is "through," and who is "plucked" ("ploughed" is the technical expression of Young Oxford of the present day, but the exact terminology is a matter of small importance). Meanwhile a considerable crowd will have collected, awaiting the appearance of "*testamurs*," as the small paper certificates, to the effect that the candidate has been successful in passing his examination, are called. Almost every class of Oxford characters will be represented,—from the don or private tutor, who has just strolled into the Schools Quad as he returned from his afternoon's constitutional, to the "scout," or college servant, who has generally a vested interest in the success, ill or good, of his youthful masters. Young Oxford proper will, of course, be there in swarms; and a picturesque medley group is the result. There is the youth who glories in an utter indifference as to whether he is through or not, and who, as the best means of exhibiting his carelessness, slipped on his top-boots and pink, immediately after his *vivá voce* examination that morning, for a gallop with George Drake's hounds, and who is in the Schools Quad now merely because "the day" happened to be a short one, and he thought, after he had put up his horse at Charley Symonds', close by, he might just as well take a look and see whether the *testamurs* were out. What matter to him whether he gets through or not? Look at him; listen to him—it is little enough that Topbar of Merton thinks either about examinations or *testamurs*, at least so you would say from his talk (somewhat ostentatiously loud, by the bye) of the splendid things which he has seen done, and done himself, in the course of "that magnificent burst." But there are moments when he gives a quick uneasy glance to the little corner door, by the side of which stands the sanctum of the clerk of the schools, and through which the examiners will presently pass when their confabulation is over; a fact that inclines one to the belief that, after all, even Topbar is not insensible to the pleasure that the appearance of his *testamur* might

afford. Boating men are there, too, swathed up in comforters and flannels, who have just run up from the river bent upon the same errand. Much laughing and loud talking may be, to while away the moments that remain before the few examiners are seen issuing, with papers under their arms, and an important look upon their faces, from the little side-door. There are not a few cases in which the interested victim will not venture himself in person to await the appearance of those dingy-looking little slips of paper which make known to him his fate, and prefers rather to despatch some trusty friend to bring him the tidings, good or bad. Accordingly, on such an occasion as the present there is always a number of these expectant messengers to be seen collected here and there in knots, discussing the chances of their respective partisans. "I'll tell you what," says a voice from one of these, "I'll lay you five to one that Brown of Trinity gets his *testamur*." "Done," says another; and the spirit of speculation gets rapidly afloat; for even the sombre academical influence of the Schools Quad cannot check the undergraduate tendency to back his opinion in some shape or other, on whatever subject that opinion may be. But speculation and discussion are alike suddenly checked by an ominous sound, with which all the bystanders are well acquainted. A door within is heard to open and shut; a few low confused murmurs of conversation are perceptible; and straightway there proceed forth from the schools themselves all four examiners, walking past the expectant assemblage of undergraduates, tutors, and college servants in single file. With a look of conscious importance, they pass by, as men who have had it in their power to decide the fate of nations. Then there comes a rush to the little door in the corner; and next the clerk of the schools himself appears with a number of slips of paper in his hand, the names of the candidates inscribed on which he begins to read aloud in a tone of amused dignity. These are the veritable *testamurs*; and great is the pressing round the official as one by one they are handed to their fortunate claimants.

"Mr. Jenkins of Brasenose" is the name that is next called out.

"Here you are," says Jenkins, or one of his trusty friends who has come to take possession of the precious document.

"One shilling, if you please, sir;" a fee which is established by some pleasant legal fiction, and paid without demur. "Thank you, sir. Mr. —"

But the name of the lucky youth, whoever he may be, is lost in the shouts of applause which hail the success of Jenkins; and away rush his admiring friends, should Jenkins himself not be on the spot, bearing the highly-prized oblong piece of paper to the rooms of its happy possessor, who has passed the last hour or so in a state of miserable suspense. But Jenkins sees his friends as they hasten through the college quadrangle from his window, and knows that it is all right; and *much hand-shaking* and merry congratulation is

there as the *testamur* is waved high in the air; and its jubilant owner is profuse in invitations to the heralds of his joy to "wine with him after hall" that night.

And what does Jones of Magdalen do, for whom there is no *testamur* at all, but who is plucked, and that for the third or fourth time? Poor Jones! it is sickening work for him. However, there is no use in crying over spilled milk, and all that can be done is to hope for better luck next time; and so Jones tries hard to console himself, and to believe the comforting assurances of his friends that it was all luck that did it, and that if the papers set had only been fair, he would and must have been through, till he grows quite reconciled to his hard fate, and declares that he really doesn't so much care. But when Jones gets back to his room that night, and sits down for a quiet pipe by himself before he goes to bed, he finds that after all he must care a little bit for it,—more than he thought he did. And then there is that dreadful letter, with the dreadful news to be written home to-morrow, and the angry looks of the governor, and the disappointed fate of a mother to be met. And as Jones thinks of all this, he becomes very gloomy and savage—angry with himself, and angry with the examiners, and generally unhappy. Terrible, indeed, are the rumours of the desperate acts to which the luckless plucked have been driven; and the story runs, and is believed too, that a certain examiner having once had occasion to disqualify a candidate for his degree, the victim drowned himself in the classic waters of the Isis,—a catastrophe which, when it reached the ears of the *terririma causa* of this dire mishap, so effectually warned and horrified him, that he never gave his consent to another pluck.

But there are still more momentous scenes than these which have been described enacted in the Schools Quad. Twice every year at Oxford (once in the early summer, and once again at the commencement of winter), the more ambitious undergraduate voluntarily submits to various examinations, the object of which is to enable him to distinguish himself above his fellows by gaining the honour of being placed in a certain class. Great, indeed, is the suspense and severe the training which precedes this grand intellectual trial. The appearance of the various class-lists are among the memorable events of the academical year, and their probable results give rise to no small speculation and surmising beforehand. It would be difficult to say whether more interest and anxiety are displayed by those whom these results immediately affect, or those who share the excitement as friends and well-wishers of the many candidates for university fame. On the day on which "the list" is known to be about to be given forth, every college, and every member of it, from its president, or provost, or principal, or whatever other title may serve to dignify the reverend gentleman, who reigns among the other authorities as *the sun* amid the lesser fires, down to the lowliest cleaner of academic

boots, participates in the prevailing suspense. "Is the list out yet?" is the question asked by every one. As may be supposed, the same quadrangle to which the reader has been already introduced is thronged with eager expectants about the hour at which it is expected that the results of the three or four weeks during which the examination in its several phases has lasted will be announced. Not unfrequently there may exist between the four examiners considerable difference of opinion as to the relative merits of the candidates, and the discussions as to where the separating line between the classes is to be drawn are protracted and warm. But let the reader suppose that all this has been now satisfactorily settled, that the examiners have left their hall of judgment, and that the clerk of the schools once more becomes visible as before; only this time he has no *testamurs* in his hand—these have all been given out long since—but in their stead a large sheet of paper. The excitement which the appearance of this at once creates proclaims plainly enough that "the class-list is out;" and without delay, in a loud tone, which is heard by all around, the presiding minister of the schools commences "names of the first class, &c.," and so on through the remaining three. As name after name is distinguished, low congratulations may be heard among the crowd; and when the roll is finished, a lusty shout not seldom testifies to the excellence of Young Oxford's lungs. Lastly, "the list" is solemnly nailed up to the door, and many are the eyes which strain to get a glimpse of it. When all is over, and the general excitement is succeeded by a lull, the telegraph-office is besieged, and candidates (some exultant, others dejected) hasten to transmit the end of their hopes and fears to friends and relations, who have been as anxiously expectant as themselves.

Such are some of the scenes, as picturesque and as thoroughly characteristic as any which the fine old city of Oxford can present,—scenes of a more permanent and a not less intense interest than the contests on the river, or the Bullingdon and Cowley ground. No one who has beheld them, whether in the character of chance spectator, or as one who is more immediately interested in them, will, we think, readily forget them, or believe that he has seen a wholly insignificant battle-ground in the somewhat limited dimensions of the Schools Quad.

BELGRAVIAN PROSE BALLADS

No. I.

THE CHAPERONE

Ay de mi ! I have two more daughters unmarried !
The sparrows in desert Belgravia are still trembling at the booming of
the bells of Saint Barnabas !
The air is still heavy with the sighs of envy which Echo multiplies in
our aristocratic neighbourhood.
Tradition still lingers round the cab-stand which my butler tells me
exists in the next street.
Still do the wandering Tentons shake their unwholesome locks and
twist their ragged moustaches as they pass our windows, and
seem half-inclined to strike up "Love not" gratis ; for have
they not five times brayed their bravest "wedding march" be-
neath my balcony ?
Five blessed girls have I married, and but one of them descended to
a commoner ! Am I not allied, through my descendants, to
four noble houses ?

Ay de mi ! I have still two daughters unmarried !
But one of them descended to a commoner, and he has but one poor
thousand a year. Poor goose ! She would be a beggar, but she
was born to economise, poor dear ; and she says Henry is rising
at the bar, whatever that may be — a bar sinister, perhaps.
Heaven forfend !
Truly she takes after her poor father, who always had a craving after
talent, as if he could not find it at home among his female
relatives. He never thanked me for settling the dear girls for
life in the peerage. His is not a soul to appreciate such a
blessing !

Ay de mi ! and I have yet two daughters unmarried !
Do they often ask me down to those antique domains where curfews
rust in castellated keeps, and whence future babies will hail
me as a forefather—mother, perhaps, I ought to say ?
Well, you see, *noblesse oblige* ; and the state is dependent on the work-
ings of its aristocracy.
I can forgive them if they do forget me ; for does not the halo that
plays round their coronets take me out of darkness ?
Do I not warm myself in their ermine, and shelter me from rude
blasts of vulgarity under their strawberry-leaves ?
Charity covereth not so many sins as does a coat-of-arms, and I shall
look for my support in their supporters.

ay de mi! those two unmarried daughters!

My beggared one writes, "Will I stay at Ada's cottage at Twickenham?"

I cannot leave my two unfledged ones. "They might like it too."

So they may, but not too often—not too often—or the bar might extend its influence.

Did not the duchess say to me last night, "You are the cleverest woman at a match I know"? I ought to be. What have I not suffered? What have I not put up with for my girls? Have not the charms of the opera been crushed out of me? Have not Mozart and Rossini been sacrificed to diplomacy, Verdi to manœuvring, and Gounod to chicane? What *fête* has any freshness for me? What new waltz brings a new sensation to my ear? Does not Mabel rhyme with Babel, and is not Godfrey a cordial abomination to my soul?

Do not my senses loathe the smell of hot-house flowers, and does not my plebeian conscience tell me I should hail a barn full of sweet milch kine as Paradise to a conservatory? Has Greenwich any bait for me, or Richmond any maid of honour? Some poet says, or I mistake, "Croquet has charms for twinkling feet!" My ancles can scarcely be said to twinkle, whatever they might have done in days gone by. I remember, when a girl, at Bath, I was told by Major Corseteer—but never mind; as I said before, my ancles do not twinkle exactly, nor has croquet any charms for my ancles. Nay, I seriously opine that oakum-picking would prove to me a greater attraction, and at all events would have the charm of novelty.

Ay de mi! and still these two dear girls unmarried!

In the old ruined abbey the wall-flower bends to all the breezes, and there the air is fresh, and the birds ever change their carolings. So in the ball-room the wall-flower bends to all who pass her—nay, smiles a hollow welcome; but air does not exist, or what little keeps up life is so mixed up with odours that one sickens at the name of Ess, and the band of Coote and Tinney brings to the tortured ear-drum but a change from three to four—from waltz to quadrille.

Do I pity the sempstress? *Non certes*. My degraded soul would willingly change places with her. Go down to supper? not for worlds!—let me try the sewing-machine for once!

Yet I must off to Scarboro', Dieppe, or Baden—Baden, Dieppe, or Scarboro'. Like the Jew what's-his-name, you know. I must on, still on! And I know they are waiting for my girls somewhere, those two scions of England's old nobility—why don't they turn up!

Ay de mi! for I have still two daughters unmarried!



AN INDICTMENT

(With an Illustration by C. J. Staniland)

I.

LOW-BROW'D Woman, that stole my Love!
Fairer than I—less true;
You fooled him first with your wily tongue
And your eyes' deceitful blue.

II.

You looked in his, till you made him swear
His first love was all a dream;
While you let him toy with your yellow hair,
And bask in your smile's false gleam.

III.

Well-a-day for your eyes so bright!
Weeping has made mine dim:
You would smile on, though he lay in his grave—
I could have died for him.

EVELYN FORBES.



J. Eastland del.

BRANLARD

E. Evans sc.

AN INDICTMENT.





A FIRESIDE STORY

TOLD BY THE POKER

THE hearthrug ought to tell this story, because she had much more to do with it than I had. But, spread out there before the fire from morning to night, she thinks only of making herself comfortable, and I daresay considers it a hardship to be shaken out of her drowsy self-sufficiency even once in the twenty-four hours. So if the story is never told till the hearthrug takes to story-telling, nobody, I fancy, is ever likely to be the better for listening to it. The fender, I am bound to add, is very little more inclined to exert himself unnecessarily. As for the tongs and shovel, they are not quite so indolent, and I wish them joy of the compliment. The hare has not much to be proud of in being able to run faster than the snail. I don't think too much of my own activity therefore, when I say, that but for an occasional waking up on my part, we should fairly be considered a slow and sleepy lot. What I mean by all this is, that it is not out of conceit of my own ability that I now put myself forward to tell this story. I do so simply because I am the only one of our fireside companionship with energy enough in his composition to take so much trouble for the benefit and warning of domineering wives in particular, and in the interests of husbands in general; and I adhere to my original opinion, that the hearthrug ought to have told it.

Should the observation I am going to make at starting happen to be repeated within hearing of any individual following the same calling as myself, he will, I am sure, understand in a moment my feelings when I say that my mistress's face, in fact her person altogether, is such a one as a drawing-room poker reflects with warm and invariable satisfaction. As to her other good qualities, I shall not express my own opinion, which might be open to the suspicion of partiality, but shall report rather that of Mr. John Thomas the footman in his own words, uttered one morning while he was in the act of putting coals on the fire, a moment after she had left the room: "By George! master's a lucky man to have such a wife! If I was sure Amelia Catharine" (upper housemaid, equally good-looking and well-conducted) "would make me such another, blow me if I wouldn't marry her without even asking to see her savings'-bank book!" Mr. John Thomas had lived in many other families, and was therefore qualified to speak knowingly on such a subject. My own impression is, that his admiration of his mistress, in her capacity of wife of his master, is abundantly justified. Of Mr. Silver, my master, I have only to say that, though he is a member of the Stock Exchange and any thing but a saint, he is certainly not at all a bad sort of gentleman. He uses me a little roughly at times; but if it were not that in doing so he makes his wife start

unpleasantly on her chair, I should not object to be so treated—should rather like it, in fact. That they are a thoroughly happy pair is what any one would soon discover who had my opportunities for observing them together,—a privilege I have used judiciously, and without a suspicion of impertinence, I hope I may safely say, for very little short of ten years: to be precise, from about the seventh day after their return from their honeymoon trip, when my mistress took formal possession of her home, and sent my rusty predecessor travelling on the way of all old iron.

Premising that from my recumbent position on the fender I saw and heard every thing I am about to relate, this is my story:

Fires had not yet been begun in the drawing-room, but, from the force of habit I suppose, Mrs. Silver, when there was no company, would sit reading or at work by the side of the fireplace while her husband went for a ride after dinner, which he did very often in the summer twilight. One evening while thus seated alone, I noticed that she paused reflectively, and presently I heard her say:

“No, no; I’ll not remind him. To say to him, ‘My love, for the first time in ten years you have forgotten the return of our wedding-day,’ might sound like a reproach. No; neither tears nor reproaches belong to a day from which date ten years of tranquil happiness. I am sure his forgetfulness arises from no want of love for me. Active and occupied as he is, I know how many other things he has to think of. If he *had* remembered—well, it would have been very delightful. However, since he has chanced to forget, let me reflect that his memory might be as retentive as that of the almanac, and yet he might not love me. No; if I avenge his forgetfulness, it shall be in my own way—by making the fireside of which he is so fond more than usually pleasant to him this evening.”

Mrs. Silver smiled and resumed her work, which that evening was a handsome smoking-cap she was embroidering for master; but I certainly saw the beginning of a tear in one of her eyes—the one nearest to me.

“The other day,” she continued, meditatively, “he was regretting that the old custom of having hot suppers had passed away. I’ve a good mind to surprise him with one to-night! Yes, I will do it! But what shall it be?—what is he specially fond of?”

I beg here to be allowed to say that though I have never had any other mistress than the lady whose behaviour I am now describing, a poker who for ten years has been in the very best middle-class society, and who has assisted at the reading aloud of all the fashionable novels and a few of the most interesting divorce cases, is able to understand the exact difference between the best and the worst of wives.

“Ah! I know what I will order!” cried my mistress, after a long pause; “a lobster *rissole*, a roasted chicken, and a lemon-pudding. That shall be my great revenge.”

She was just about to ring the bell, when the drawing-room door

was suddenly opened, and a lady friend of hers, too much agitated to stand on ordinary ceremony, flounced into the room, exclaiming in tones which reminded me of the grating of a file—with which inharmonious noise I had been painfully familiar at an earlier part of my career—for even a poker can attest the truth of the French proverb, *il faut souffrir pour être beau*—

“My dear, I knew you *were* at home, so came up—only for a moment. Don't disturb yourself. I've no time to sit down. I'm boiling over with indignation!”

“Dear me!” replied my mistress.

“Quite as much on your account as on my own, my love!” cried Mrs. Toovey, throwing herself on to the ottoman in the centre of the room, and untying her bonnet-strings almost fiercely.

“It's very good of you, I'm sure,” said my mistress.

“You may smile, my love, but it's no smiling matter for all that, I can assure you,” cried Mrs. Toovey.

“Not tragic, I hope?”

“I don't know that!” replied Mrs. Toovey, whisking her shawl out of the way, and plunging her hand into the pocket of her dress. “Do you know this handwriting?”

Mrs. Toovey held out a letter to my mistress, as if it had been a cup of poison.

“I've no doubt it's my husband's,” said my mistress, without taking it out of Mrs. Toovey's hand.

“Read it, my dear, read it!” cried that indignant lady.

“Pray excuse me; I see it is addressed to *Mr.* Toovey,” my mistress said gently.

“O,” cried Mrs. Toovey, “take my word for it, you'll some day repent of indulging in such silly scruples. A husband and wife are one, and the wife cannot too often or too emphatically remind her husband of the fact. At least you'll not refuse to listen to the contents of this atrocious document?”

I don't think any refusal would have induced Mrs. Toovey to defer the reading of the letter for a single moment. She read:

“My dear Job, the supper-party of to-night, married and single, may count on me, even to the extent of an adjournment to Cremorne. I shall not say any thing about the affair to my wife, who would be fancying all sorts of dreadful consequences inevitable.”

“There, my dear! what do you say to *that*?” demanded Mrs. Toovey, refolding the letter with a spiteful jerkiness of action, and putting it back into her pocket, as if for further use.

“I say that I am much obliged to Mr. Silver for the thoughtful care he had taken to keep me in ignorance of what he fancied it might be unpleasant for me to know.”

Mrs. Toovey gave herself so sharp a twist on the ottoman, that I wonder she did not lose her balance and tumble off.

"Really, my dear," she cried, "you—I must say—you make the blood curdle in my veins! You appear so wilfully blind that, positively, if I didn't know you have been married to the man for ten years, I should fancy you were still in love with your husband."

"Your imagination would not lead you in the least astray," answered my mistress, quietly smiling; "I daresay I ought to be very much ashamed to make such a confession. But don't for a moment suppose that my love for my husband is of the high romantic kind; it never was that. He did not run away with me in a midnight storm of thunder and lightning, and marry me in spite of all the world, his parents and mine included. Time, if it has made me acquainted with his faults, has also taught me to bear with them without disgust, impatience, or weariness. There is nothing to be surprised at in the continuance of such a love as mine—entirely unromantic, jog-trot, you see. Such as it, the sort of love I now feel for my husband, I hope to feel for him when my hair is gray, without blushing to confess it."

Mrs. Toovey tied her bonnet-strings as tightly as if her chin had been a package of hardware, and she had been cording it for exportation.

"My dear," she cried, "I can hardly trust myself to say what I think; but this I *will* say: if any wife ever went the way to spoil her husband, you are going exactly that way now. Patience with his faults, indeed! Mr. Toovey, I daresay, would be delighted to find me patient with his—and heaven knows he has enough of them! But that is not *my* nature. I know my duty as a woman of intellect a little better than *that*! Why, my love, I have just come from having a scene with him about this shocking letter of your husband's. I made him confess every thing: that after supper the whole party are to go to Cremorne. *Are* they! 'Mr. Toovey,' I said, 'you dare to go, and I'll follow you!' What is the result? Mr. Toovey has learned that when I say a thing I mean it. He has promised me he will not think of going, after my prohibition. Do, my love, let me give you some advice on the way to manage your husband."

"O, certainly, if it will afford you any satisfaction to do so," replied my mistress, with a good-natured little laugh.

"You won't laugh, my dear," said Mrs. Toovey, "when you find out, some day, that another woman has carried off your husband's affections; and not only his affections, but his fortune—for that's what commonly happens now. However, I see plainly enough you are prepared to despise my advice, and to laugh at my solemn warning. So be it. But, take my word for it, you'll find too soon what cause you have for repentance."

"I hope not. Really, my dear, you seem determined to imagine my husband a second Lovelace. You forget that he is not a young man of twenty."

"Good heavens, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Toovey; "what have *their* ages to do with it?"

"Well, even if that is so," replied my mistress, smiling; "my husband is as ungallant a man as you could name."

"To *you*, perhaps, my love," answered the amiable Toovey, with her sweetest smile. If it had been winter, and I had happened to be red-hot, I should have been strongly tempted to throw myself at the lady's feet, and set fire to her at this particular moment.

"To you also, dear; for, you remember, it is only a few days ago you were complaining of his 'shocking want of politeness.'"

"Very likely; but his rudeness to *me* is easily accounted for. It is because I give you what he considers ill advice; which means that he fears to lose the power he now enjoys of tyrannising over you at his pleasure."

"My dear, have you ever written a sensation novel?" asked my mistress, with an arch smile playing about the corners of her mouth.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You have such a vivid imagination; the portrait you have drawn of my husband so much resembles that of a romance-hero," replied my mistress.

"Pray let us drop the subject," cried Mrs. Toovey. "Positively your notions are an outrage to common sense."

"I'm sure, my dear, I hope to be forgiven. You see the scope of my mind is so very prosaic; you'll think so, no doubt, when I tell you that at the moment you came I was busy planning a little unromantic hot supper for my Blue Beard—especially a lemon-pudding, of which I know he is particularly fond."

"You'll find you have had your labour for your pains, for he will certainly not be at home to partake of it."

"My own impression is that he *will*," said my mistress gently. "Will you and your husband drop in at ten o'clock?"

"With pleasure, my dear; for I am sure you will be alone, and glad of sympathetic company. Do, my love, allow *me* to remonstrate with your husband, if you don't feel equal to the task yourself."

"No, no; pray don't do any thing of the sort!" cried my mistress hastily. "You are not so well acquainted with my husband as I am, and might do me more harm than good."

"Just as you please, my dear," said Mrs. Toovey, starting to her feet, and pulling her shawl about her shoulders with a spasmodic action of the hands. "Just as you please, of course; though I did not think I was quite such a fool as *you* appear to consider me."

Saying which Mrs. Toovey flounced out of the room even more impetuously than she had flounced into it.

"The foolish creature!" said my mistress, after she was gone; "it is no fault of hers if she hasn't made me very uncomfortable; and all with the best intentions. Those best intentions! What would she not have said if she had known that to-day is my wedding-day? But I am sure my husband *does not care to go to this supper-party*. He has

"That will do, I think," said my mistress, after comparing the new cap with the old dressing-gown. "You may take it off now."

"There's no need for hurry, my love," replied my master, throwing himself comfortably into a favourite chair; "I shall not start for this precious supper for another hour. But you were saying that my going out vexed you in one way, though not in another."

"I meant that I would rather have had you at home this evening, because I had planned a nice little hot supper for you,—a lobster *rissole*, a roasted chicken, and a dainty lemon-pudding."

"A lemon-pudding!" cried my master.

"But now I'll tell you why I do not mind your going out to supper: it's because I know you will get no wine so good as that in your own cellar; no lemon-pudding so nice as the one I've had made for you, even if you get any at all; because you'll have to wear what you call 'a choker' instead of your dressing-gown,—have your ears split with noisy conversation,—be bored to death with frothy politics,—and have no opportunity, however much you may wish for it, for saying to your wife, 'Laura, I love you better than any thing else in the world.'"

What my master did is what I really believe every man in his senses would have done under the circumstances. In other words, he put his arm round his wife's waist and kissed her, and went on kissing her while the clock on the mantelpiece slowly and distinctly ticked off thirty seconds.

"You see I *must* go, Laura," he said, not quite *apropos*; "I've promised 'em."

I fancied that I detected just the faintest shade of disappointment fall upon my mistress's face; but she said quite cheerfully:

"By all means, dear; and if you would like to oblige me, there is one particular neck-tie I should like you to wear to-night. I'll fetch it."

She left the room, and in a few minutes returned with a handsome white neck-tie, beautifully embroidered at the ends.

"Why," exclaimed my master, "this is the one I wore on my wedding-day! And you are really going to let me wear it when you will not even be present?"

"I think you'll own it's very magnanimous of me," answered my mistress, with a very significant twinkle in her eyes; "but quite in accordance with my ordinary heroism of character; and, of course, without a thought in my head of having the lemon-pudding all to myself. But what *are* you doing? I declare you've made a perfect rope of it round your neck!"

"By Jove! I've done worse—I've torn it!" cried my master.

"You have indeed," replied my mistress. "Ah, well, it's ten years old."

"Ten years old? Good heavens, Laura,—what's the day of the

month?" demanded my master; and then, without waiting to be answered, he threw himself at her feet, exclaiming: "Beat me, my darling! I deserve it; thoughtless, ungrateful brute that I am! A day that was the beginning of so much happiness entirely forgotten! Put away the dear old neck-tie; I shall sup with you, love. Let them wait for me if they like. Half an hour ago I was an ass, making myself and you uncomfortable for fear some people I don't care a pin for should think I preferred your society to theirs,—ashamed of my own happiness, in fact. Let them think I am governed by my wife! You *do* govern me, Laura; I know it; and it shall always be my glory to own the influence of your goodness, kindness, and gentleness. You are the fountain-head of all my happiness; and if it is ridiculous for a man to confess that he loves his wife better than all else in the world, let me appear the most ridiculous of husbands. Laugh with me, Laura! Why, my darling, you are crying!"

Something at that moment affected my sight; but I have no doubt that what my master said was literally true. An instant later, Mr. John Thomas opened the door to announce the return of Mrs. Toovey, but the lady herself entered before he had time to pronounce her name. She appeared both surprised and disgusted to see that pretty little picture of domestic felicity.

"What!" she exclaimed; "are you not gone?"

"No; I am going to sup at home," replied my master.

"When all the rest are gone?" cried Mrs. Toovey. "Ridiculous!"

"Good heavens!" he cried, bursting into laughter; "there's no being in agreement with you, Mrs. Toovey. Half an hour ago you quarrelled with me for proposing to *go*; now you quarrel with me for *not* going."

"But *your* husband, dear?" inquired my mistress.

"Gone, my love! Gone, in spite of all I could do or say to prevent him, after flying into the most dreadful passion, and terrifying me almost to death. I can't understand it at all. It's as if he had suddenly become quite another man—a lion, my love."

And Mrs. Toovey threatened to go instantaneously into hysterics, in proof of the terrible change that had come over her hitherto submissive "lord and master." It required a great deal of persuasion on the part of my mistress to get her to give up the idea of the hysterics in the first place, and in the next, of going to Cremorne to confront her peccant husband, "in the shockingest hansom I can find," as she said.

As to my master's suggestion, that in dealing with the wild beasts called husbands, wives may, in some cases, find coaxing do better than coercion, she emphatically pooh-poohed it, even after a second help of the lemon-pudding at supper—nay, even after more than one glass of cold punch.

I will only say in conclusion, that's my story. If the hearthrug could have told it better, *why didn't she* tell it?



MARKET STREET, MANCHESTER

BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA

THE last time I was at Manchester, at the exceedingly comfortable and well-appointed Queen's Hotel—they run you up terrific bills there; but you may have every luxury Sardanapalus ever dreamt of by paying for it; and I know many London hotels where money even will not purchase decent comfort—I received a letter from a well-known Lancaster firm, begging me to pay a visit to their Machine-works at Bolton, which are perhaps the largest and most splendid in the world, and reduce, in comparison, the gigantic *usine* of "La Société Cockrill" at Liege to the dimensions of a village-blacksmith's forge. I daresay that, having accepted the invitation, I should have passed a very pleasant time, and added something to my slender stock of knowledge as to mechanical forces and their application, and partaken of an excellent lunch; but hospitality is one of the virtues most sedulously cultivated in the great North Country. I would have you to know that in recording this circumstance, I have not the slightest wish to appear egotistical, or to hint that, although no prophet in my own country, I am habitually received in the provinces with marks of attention on the part of our strangers. A man who passes most of his time in London, and fancied that he has acquired a reputation there, in one calling or another, cannot give a better dose of physic to his pompousness than by trailing abroad; and when he has sojourned, say, ten days in a city of four or five thousand inhabitants, and finds out that he knows nobody, and that nobody has called upon him, and that the king hasn't asked him to the dinner, and that the municipality have neglected to confer the freedom of the city upon him; and that, in short, the four or five hundred thousand people go about their daily and nightly business just as though he, the great Mr. SIBI, had never had any existence, he is in a favourable condition to confess that there may be other counts besides one's own, of which the denizens may be disinclined to listen to the vaticination. The invitation to visit the Machine-works was not sent to me because I had painted the "Last Sermon" or "The Breek Bairn;" because I was the composer of "God bless the Prince of Como," or the inventor of the patent noiseless barrel-organs—I devoutly wish that I were!—or the author of "Dottings from the Dissecting-room and Humours of the Dead-house," or the discoverer of the sources of the Fleet Ditch. It was not sent to me because *was Mr. SIBI*: the communication was forwarded on the assumption

that I was Mr. Somebody else. It was a remarkable letter, beginning "*Muy señor nostro*," couched in the very purest Castilian, and overflowing with that epistolary hyperbole which I fancy the Spaniards must have learnt from the Moors when they held Iberian sway. I was entreated, as a "most eminent manufacturer of cotton thread," to come over to Bolton and see the works. Nor was I guilty, I saw it, of *l'es-tiquette* in opening and reading this letter; for it was addressed to me, without any distinguishing initials; and there was nobody else of my name in the hotel, nor so far as I knew, abating six exceptions, in the United Kingdom. Once in a year or so I receive one of these oddly mis-sent epistles. I had one once from a merchant of Venice, blowing me up soundly for having made ducks-and-drakes of a cargo of linseed, by consigning myself to a wrong broker. This letter was in Italian. It appears that I, or Mr. Somebody else, was a ship-captain. Then, after a long interval, I received one in French, and in a delicate female hand. Enclosed was a little picture of the *Madonna col Bambino*, printed on calico. It was from my sister, or Mr. Somebody else's sister, who was a nun at Quebec. It appears that I had been leading for many years a wandering and not altogether exemplary life; but there was yet time for Dearest Thomas—my name was Thomas—to repent. Meanwhile, my sister prayed every night to the Madonna for me. What more could I do than send these letters back to the post-office? They have rotted in dead-letter departments, at home and abroad, long since, I fancy. I wonder who the Mr. Somebody elses were, and whether they ever received any letters intended for me. You will understand that, having a lively remembrance of the mischances of the wrong Tom Moore in the farce of the "Irish Lion," I did not take advantage of the invite couched in pure Castilian. I wrote to the firm to say that I was a manufacturer, not of cotton thread, but of "yarns," printed, and as highly-coloured as the public taste would permit; and, not to be behind-hand in courtesy, I kissed their hands and their feet, hoped that they might live a thousand years, and that their shadows might never be less. They sent me a civil note in reply, explaining that they had an agent in Manchester, who being himself of Peninsular extraction, and seeing my name in the travellers' book at the Queen's, had jumped at the conclusion that I was a manufacturer of cotton thread, well known, it seems, in Spain, and who had come to Manchester to look about him for something in the five-hundred-horse-power, endless-strap, and cogged-wheel line. You see that there are advantages and disadvantages in the possession of an uncommon as of a common name. Mine enables me to claim kindred with some dukes of Edom mentioned in one of the Books of Moses—a highly respectable ancestry, I take it; to say nothing of a Proconsul of Cæsarean Mauritania mentioned in profane history. But, on the other hand, I am not prepared to say that it was not my great-grandfather whom the Inquisition burnt in a highly frescoed *san-benito* in the great square of Lisbon, A.D. 1722;

and who had been guilty, I fear, of recanting from Judaism to Catholicism; then turning Protestant; then relapsing back to Judaism, and winding-up by practising sorcery and magic and manufacturing bad money. I read the account of this gentleman's incineration in the *Annual Register*; and in his many changes of opinion recognised, uneasily, a hereditary family failing. *Per contra*, if your name be a too common one, of what capias of équivoque are you not the sport! I don't wonder at the King of Prussia telegraphing to our Queen to beg that Müller might not be hanged. The whole *bourgeoisie* of Berlin, backed by the Herr Müller who, with his friend Schultze, is the standing butt of the Berlin *Kladderadatch*, must have backed his Prussian Majesty in his modest request. The most thick-skinned Englishman even must feel occasionally uncomfortable under the appellation of William Palmer. In the London clubs community of names is a fruitful source of errors and heart-burnings. Brown the briefless barrister receives a requisition entreating him to stand for the borough of Pocket Breeches; while Brown the millionaire is favoured per post with the eighth edition of Mr. Snip's little bill, with a very distinct reference in the postscript to the Westminster County Court. As for Smith, he has made up his mind to blackball every fellow of that name who is put up at the Junior Egregious. He accuses one Smith of having dined out for a whole season, and another of having married a girl with fifty thousand pounds, on the strength of his, the original Smith's, name. "And, confound it," he cries, "they are all John Thomas Smiths, sir."

Not at all foreign, believe me, to the purport of this paper are the foregoing reflections on the eccentricities of nomenclature. I was laughing with a friend at the Queen's after dinner on the temporary distinction I had enjoyed as an "eminent manufacturer of thread," when, adjourning to the snug writing and lounging rooms known as the "America," my companion, an old habitué of the house, called for a few of the back volumes of the "Travellers' Register." They brought us a pile of dusty tomes, reaching four or five years back. What a collection of autographs was there! From every nook and corner of the world had the visitors come. From farthest Ind; from Sonora and Anjona and Dakota; from South American interiors only skirted and smelt at by the far-reaching Humboldt; from Holland and Belgium and Italy and Greece and Australia and Ceylon and Prince Edward's Island and Shanghai and Lubeck and Bremen; from every where—North-east, South, and East and West—from the country of Prester John and from Fiddler's Green had rolled the tide of travel to this great grimy shore. And why? whence the motive? where the inducement? Why should Hans and Jan and Juan and Pedro and Alfonso and Miltiades and Selim and Jonathan and Chang have been so eager to make a pilgrimage to this smokiest of shrines? The colossal chimneys are no minarets; there is no kaaba in the Infirmary. There is a grand old *Cathedral*; but no sainted dust, no ghastly relics set in precious stones,

no rare paintings are to be seen there. The banks of the Irwell are not classic; the public buildings of Manchester, albeit lofty and imposing, cannot vie with those of Rome, or Venice, or Munich. The mansions of the merchant princes and the cotton lords abound in works of art; but those gems are not habitually shown to strangers. There must be some deeper and more secret reason for the continual concourse of pilgrims from every part of the civilised globe to this huge, murky, and it must be added not very elegant or agreeable city. Ay, there is, indeed, such a reason, and a most sufficing one too. What is Manchester but the Mecca of the Manufacturing Mammon? Eleleu! what alliteration is here! The printer will turn up his eyes at such an array of "ems." It is all true, notwithstanding. This is Mecca. There is but one Deity worshipped here—Cotton, and the Manufacturer is his prophet. Messrs. Mahomet and Co. do an enormous business. They did not suffer very severely during the American civil war, although Cotton was temporarily deposed from his throne; for they had pretty large stocks of the calico koran on hand. The markets were, indeed, glutted with Manchester goods; and they were not sorry for the intervention of a slack time, when they could rest on their laurels, so to speak, and thin the numbers of their hands, and give a slight respite to their pay-clerks. The "hands" did not appreciate the convenience of these arrangements so fully as might have been hoped for by their disinterested employers. But your hands were ever a discontented and ungrateful race. "A bad lot, sir," says Josiah Bounderby, Esq.

I learnt a lesson or two from this pile of dusty, blotted volumes at the Queen's. We are slightly too apt to think that foreigners only come to England to see St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey and the Tower; to dine at Greenwich or Richmond, and hear an oratorio at the Crystal Palace; to stroll on the cliff at Brighton, or take a drive down the Long Walk at Windsor; to see King Charles's beauties at Hampton Court, the Lord Mayor's show, and the Derby-day; to make a pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon and Kenilworth and Holyrood; and, returning to their own lands, to discourse with rapture on the beauties of the British Constitution and the efficiency of the British policeman,—grumbling a little, maybe, at the dearness of British hotels, the badness of British wines, and the dull misery of the British Sunday. Believe me, the foreigners come for other purposes than these. Many a sallow, spectacled, black or tawny bearded alien passes rapidly through London, scorning its lions and its rare shows, and resolutely sets his face northwards. "*Quant à moi, je vais à Manchester,*" exclaims the stout Frenchman from Mulbonne or Elbœuf. "*Ho fatto un giro a Blackpool ed a Oldham,*" writes the Signor home to his firm at Turin. "*Es preciso salir de Huddersfield por andar a Leeds,*" says the travelling Caballero. "*Ich muss nach Stockbort gehen,*" cries the burly Herr. Bless you, they care nothing about Poets' Corner or the Horse Armoury. A dinner at the *Divan* or the *Wellington*, and a night at

Weston's or the Alhambra, surfeits them with the sights of London. Prompt to generalise and take things *en masse*, we assume all foreigners to be greasy, hairy, low-crowned-hatted Mossoos, whom poor John Leech used to draw with a spiteful cleverness, so persistent and so full of narrow-minded antigallicanism, that, but for its infinite drollery, we should have set it down to the score of insanity. The business-like foreigner who comes to England *on* business performs his business in a most methodical yet expeditious manner, and then goes about his business, which is often situated at the farthest corner of the world. This traveller has been strangely neglected by our painters of manners. I assure you there are persons from foreign parts who are quite unacquainted with the eighteenpenny restaurants of Leicester Square, and are not in the habit of rushing into the establishments of the *blanchisseuses de fin* in "Le Soho" to have a shirt-front and a pair of wristbands rapidly washed and mangled. I have known foreigners who have put up peaceably at Anderton's or Radley's Hotel, Blackfriars, or have even settled down in hostleries so far east as America Square in the Minorities. They are lost in London—who is not lost in that Maelstrom?—or eclipsed by the braided and pomatumed Bohemians of the Quadrant and Coventry Street; but to see them in their full bloom, and be assured that they are by no means a feeble folk, or so frivolous, volatile, and bagatelle-hunting as we most unjustly imagine all foreigners to be, you should come to Manchester, deposit your portmanteau at the Queen's, unfurl your umbrella, and take a walk down MARKET STREET. There you will see the foreigner who knows how many blue beans make five, and how to take care of Number One,—who is a neat hand at making bargains, and has a remarkably keen consciousness as to the side of the slice of bread on which the layer of butter is to be found, and to get the better of whom you must rise very early in the morning indeed. Do you think those Germans are sojourning amongst us with any idea of imbuing us with a due appreciation of the merits of Strauss or Schopenhauer, or in the hope of teaching us the doctrine of the Categorical Imperative? Not a bit of it. They have come to Manchester to make money; to sample piece-goods; to scan with a sharp eye the contents of dye-vats; to pick up any stray hints that may be lying about concerning the bleaching, spinning, and hot-pressing of that textile fabric in which ninety-nine per cent of humanity preferably attire themselves. Regard that group of yellow-faced Spaniards sententiously puffing at the eternal cigarito. If you imagine that their visit is in any way inspired by a desire to search for traces of the residence of Philip the Second, spouse of Bloody Queen Mary among us, or to inquire whether any of the best bower-anchors and rudder-chains of the Spanish Armada remain in Woolwich dockyard, you are very much mistaken. They have come to Manchester to buy, to bargain, and to learn; and to carry back excerpts from the cotton *Koran* to Seville and Cadiz. And those Greeks, with their shrewd

hungry faces, their lean brown paws, and their loosely-fitting surtouts and fez caps of dusky red. Delude not yourself with the idea that they are a deputation sent hither to make one more desperate effort to force the Greek crown on Prince Alfred, or to buy-up copies of Lord Derby's *Homer*, or to borrow a division of the metropolitan police for the purpose of putting down Greek brigandage. *Pas le moins du monde*. They have come straight as the bees come to where they know there are sweets to be sucked,—to Manchester. They care about as much for Prince Alfred as they do for Homer. Their goal was Manchester. *Eis ten polin*. Right into the heart of Cottonopolis, of Calicostantinople. And how they work and grub, and at last wax fat, and abandon the loose surtout for the British white waistcoat, and the fantastic skull-cap for the chimney-pot of ordinary business life!

These strange faces, and sometimes stranger garbs, light up Market Street, and give it character and colour and *cachet*. To tell the plain unvarnished truth, Market Street needs all these adventitious aids. Come, come, you sensible, intelligent men of Manchester, be just, be candid; see yourselves as others see you, and don't be angry with a meek but conscientious scribe, who, after all, has seen a good deal of the world as it rolls, and who, laying his hand on his heart, and kissing a mental Book, affirms that Manchester is the dingiest hole upon which he has ever set eyes. Ha! what was that heaved at the head of the scribe? Half a brick! What was that confused sound of voices? A storm of uncomplimentary epithets in the Lancashire dialect? Well, I cannot help it. It is the plain truth; but when ever was the plain truth palatable? I say that the first aspect of Manchester is enough to give a nervous man the horrors for life; that the great majority of the streets are unsufferably ugly and tasteless; that the large districts inhabited by the poorer classes are cheerless and squalid and filthy; that there are few favourable sites for the display of public buildings; and that the public edifices themselves, like the private ones, like the pavement, the palings, the lamp-posts, the very trees and hedges in the environs, are disfigured and bewrayed by a veil of smoky grime. Having stated this, I am quite prepared to have sent me by some anonymous friend a copy of some Manchester paper, in which another anonymous admirer accuses me of foully and wilfully libelling this great manufacturing city, winding up by charitable hints that I am a liar and a slanderer, that I subscribed to the Confederate Loan, and was intimately connected with the Cornhill jewel-robbery.

Impatience of criticism as to architectural shortcomings is one of the surest signs of provincialism. London, the capital of the world, very willingly dons sackcloth and puts ashes on its head; but Little Pedlington assumes itself to be perfection. What Londoner is bold enough to defend the National Gallery and the Trafalgar fountains; to maintain that Middle Row Holborn ought not to be pulled down; to deny that Whitechapel and *St. Giles's* are a disgrace to our civilisation? But

beware of saying any thing about the dilapidated state of the pump at Stoke Pogis ; venture not to allude to the discoloured state of the river at Smokely-on-Sewer. The state of the popular mind which winces at and resents criticism on the part of strangers, is the more pugnacious as it retards, and often absolutely paralyses progress and improvement. Tell a sweep that the Prince of Wales is in the habit of emptying the contents of a soot-bag over his person every morning, and the useful industrial who cleanses our chimneys will never dream of washing his face after his day's work. If the municipality of Manchester would only "put their shoulders to the wheel"—a phrase which should not be too frequently employed, since it was the favourite expression of those wretched, bloodthirsty niggers in Jamaica—if one chief magistrate with some taste, some public spirit, some nobility of feeling, could obtain office, I do believe that in an astonishingly short space of time Manchester could be cleansed and beautified; and that within a very few years it might be made one of the handsomest as well as, what it is now, nearly the richest city in the world. But this is not to be done by subscribing hundreds, or even thousands of pounds for the erection of statues to princes, or generals, or admirals; which statues speedily grow as dingy as the quarters which surround them. It is not to be done by filling one side of a mean and shabby street with a thundering range of warehouses five stories high, overflowing with decoration, but in every one of whose stories some fundamental rules of the five orders of architecture are violated. It is to be done by an energetic and powerful municipal government, who will utterly clear away slums, construct new streets, and vote money for new buildings. It is to be done by joint-stock improvement companies, who will construct new and palatial hotels, theatres, arcades, shops, and dwelling-houses. I don't know what Mr. Ruskin will think of this axiom in political economy, but I maintain that *architectural splendour is an investment that will always pay*; and I believe that, were an hotel as sumptuous as the Charing Cross, or the Langham, built in the middle of the New Cut—were the "Vic." made as large and as magnificent as Covent Garden—and were the stately mansions of Tyburnia and South Kensington transplanted to Bethnal Green, the speculation would within a very brief space of time become profitable.

The Manchester people want a Lorenzo the Magnificent, a Napoleon III. They have perhaps such potentates in their cotton lords. Unroof me hundreds of Manchester houses, pull me down the high stone walls encircling the villas on the side towards Cheshire, and such splendour of decoration, such wealth in art treasures, would perhaps be revealed as Florence could not match or Rome surpass. Old masters and modern masters—well-nigh priceless; statuary and carved work, and painted glass; gems and cameos, and prints and drawings, and gorgeous furniture,—all these I make no doubt could be exhibited to view, were Asmodeus to do his office. But O, you grand Signors of

the Spinning Jenny, why not have some of this grandeur and beauty outside your dwellings? why not expend some of it *pro bono publico*—for the whole city's benefit? You may object that a plain lawn is quite good enough for plain business men; that you have no money to waste on gewgaws and gimcracks. But you *do* spend money on objects of mere ornament;—only you keep them to yourselves. You are not wholly selfish either. You will come down to the Townhall, or the Mayor's parlour, and scatter your guineas broadcast, if a memorial, or a hospital, or a church be required. The blunder you commit is this: that you beautify the part, and leave the whole in squalor; that you put, so to speak, a brass knocker on a pig-sty door, and erect a kiosque on the top of a muck-midden. Instead of this parcel-improvement, how would it be if you took a Sansovino, a Bramante, a Scamozzi, a Giulio Romano into your permanent employ, and set them to a life-long work in making your city splendid? Believe me, Sansovino, Romano, and the rest are to be found for the seeking. They are waiting—their palettes ready set, their drawing-boards and T-squares at hand, their mallets and chisels prepared. And do not think that it is derogatory to business men to build them a city on which all that can be achieved by the genius of the architect and the painter has been lavished. The Genoese pass for very sharp customers. Look at their palaces. The Venetians were for a thousand years the most business-like people in Europe. Look at the Loggetta and the Procuratie Vecchie. The Antwerp-ers once led the commerce of the North. Look at their Exchange. See what the thrifty traders did in Brussels and Bruges and Ghent.

But I am building castles in the air; and worse than that, I have mortgaged my "carcasses," and may be bankrupt—as to printed space—before they are half-finished. I asked you to take a stroll down Market Street, and to look upon the foreigners there. Well; what else is there to see? Now candour compels me to confess that there is very little indeed. Bricks, according to the Hebrew bond-servants, are not to be made without straw. In Market Street there are bricks enough in all conscience; but the difficulty of getting any thing picturesque, or even pyramidal, out of the bricks of Manchester is great, if not insuperable. Hough, Pendleton, Strangeways, Cheetham, Smedley, Newton, Mills-Platting, Beswick, Ardwick, Chorlton-upon-Medlock, Hulme, Ancoates,—on every side are suburbs and outlying districts, stretching further and further out into the country, and telling this same sempiternal tale of bricks and mortar. But Market Street—what of that? Well, it is a long street, and a tolerably wide one; and from early in the morning until late at night it is choked by a crowd intent upon making money. Those bawling little newsboys at the corner, by Piccadilly, are all money-making; for the street-traffic in newspapers at Manchester—a traffic which has been recently "developed" in London with consequences most disastrous to the comfort and peace of mind of quiet pedestrians—reminds you of the frenzied News Exchange in Wall

Street and Broadway, New York. The Manchester papers are very cheap; they overflow with advertisements, admirably classified; but beyond telegrams and short paragraphs of general intelligence, and one short leader, denunciatory of somebody or something, there is not much reading in them. A plethora of advertisements and a flood of telegrams are, indeed, the bane of the English provincial press; nor are our London newspapers exempt from the evil influence of those nuisances. I call them nuisances, because not one-half of the telegrams or one-tithe of the advertisements tell any thing approaching the truth: the first mainly deal with the *suppressio veri*; the last take delight in the *suggestio falsi*.

I notice, in Market Street, that Manchester does not seem to be cursed with so many ragged, half-naked, cadaverous, destitute children as Liverpool is. In the most frequented streets of the last-named place you may see, and not unfrequently, a spectacle which I take to be unparalleled in any other city in the world: *that of children of tender years in a state of drunkenness*. You certainly don't see this in Manchester; nor do beggar-brats hang about the doors of the hotels importuning you for alms. There are plenty of shoe-blacks and news-boys, ay and of news-girls; but *their* trade is a legitimate one, and the pursuit thereof keeps them honest. The bigger Manchester children are, of course, at work in the factories. Lord Shaftesbury's kind-hearted legislation keeps those who are under a certain age out of the mill; but I doubt whether the Ten Hours Act, well meant as it was, has done quite as much good as its philanthropic promoters imagined it would do. Young children have been forbidden to work in factories under the supposition that their parents would then have time to send them to school. *Do* they send them to school? I mean all of them. May you not see in every manufacturing town tribes of dirty and neglected youngsters, lazying, or prowling, or loitering about the streets, who are not permitted by the law to assist their parents towards gaining a livelihood, but who are allowed by this same law to rove about at large, idly and shiftlessly, often to acquire the very worst habits? In Liverpool the swarm of tattered young Calibans in the streets is a sight as shameful and revolting as it is in London—great nursing-mother of all horrors and of all shames. In Manchester there is a certain proportion of juvenile destitution and juvenile depravity, but its manifestation is far less salient and far less painful than I have known it to be in many towns with a far smaller population.

The shops of Market Street. Well; they are commodious, and make a brave show of varied merchandise, and seem generally crowded with customers. But shops are shops all the civilised world over; and in England, with its close-meshed network of railroads, and its incessant system of intercommunication, it is almost impossible to fix on any article in the shop of London which within a few hours, or a day or two at the very utmost, does not find its way into the plate-glass win-

dows of Manchester and Liverpool, and Edinburgh and Glasgow. I mean to write an essay, some of these days, upon the "Monotony of Modern Civilisation." Some notion of the monotony I mean may, perhaps, come over you in perusing these papers. One street is closely similar to another. Cæsarea and Pompeii are very much alike, especially Pompeii. The stupidity of the scribe—his dulness, blindness, and indolence—may have something to do with this sameness; but railways, the telegraph, the cheap press, and the illustrated newspapers have, I think, a great deal more. "There is nothing new under the sun," quoth the wise man. Well, there may be, in actual existence, *nothing* new; still, "under the sun" in the desert, on the prairie, in the sultry bayou, in the great cedar-forest, on the scarp of the giant mountain, on the wide ocean, you shall find out things which are, to you at least, both new and strange. But under the fog and the smoke of great cities there is absolutely nothing that possesses the charm of novelty. The shops of Market Street Manchester are the shops of Church Street Liverpool, of Cheapside, of Regent Street, of the Boulevards, of any where you choose to mention. The same French clocks, porte-monnaies, parasols, and electro-gilt nick-nacks; the same statuettes in porcelain and parian and bronze; the same "latest spring novelties" in ladies' mantles and gentlemen's scarves; the same walking-sticks, Berlin-wool patterns, patent seamless petticoats, army razors, pots of bear's grease, simpering photographs, and velvet-bound editions of the Church Service. The Eastern monarch offered untold riches to any one who should procure him a fresh pleasure. If I could afford it, I would offer a handsome reward to any body who could show me any article sold in any shop, in any city of Europe, not procurable every where else. I say this with a keen remembrance of having bought Cockle's pills in Venice, and Crosse and Blackwell's pickles in Mexico, and of being able to purchase fresh caviar at Fortnum and Mason's, and Bologna sausages at Bartovalli's in the Haymarket.

Let me hasten to remark that the Manchester omnibuses, as seen urging on their wild career in Market Street, appear to be much larger, handsomer, and better horsed than public conveyances of the same class in London. The cabs too, both hansoms and four-wheelers, are larger and more commodious than ours; and a very small proportion of the drivers seem to be irremediable ruffians. Was it worth travelling four hundred miles to find out thus much? I question it. But where is the use of my telling you that in Lancashire there are 1,000 factories, employing 300,000 hands, and with a power of 90,000 horses moving 1,000,000 power-looms and 20,000,000 spindles; that nine-tenths of these are within thirty miles of Manchester, and that the annual produce of the cotton manufactures is 68,000,000 sterling a year, or one-fourth of a million per diem? You may read all these statistics in the guide-books; indeed, I am free to confess that it was from a shilling one, published by Messrs. Adams of Fleet Street, that I gleaned the

interesting facts which I have just recorded. Or would you like me to tell you about Arkwright and Crompton, thus poaching on the printed preserves of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge? fancy we have had quite enough of *that*, and that you would very soon have enough of me, did I begin to preach Penny Magazine to you.] is not my fault if in Market Street I fail to recognise any monument fountains, or Gothic fanes—if the street-corners are not decorated with flamboyant shrines of saints and virgins—if there are no tall gabled old houses, with richly-carved fronts—if your feet or your cab bear you by no domes

“ Mosque-like, with many a stately portico,
The statues ranged along an azure sky ;
By many a pile in more than eastern pride,
Of old the residence of merchant kings ;
The fronts of some, though Time had shatter'd them,
Still glowing with the richest lines of art,
As though the wealth within them had run o'er.”

It all resolves itself into the philosophy of Albert Smith's engineer “England isn't Austria, and Austria isn't England, Mr. Smith, and you can't make 'em so.” Manchester, I doubt not, could have bought up Tyre and Sidon, Carthage, and other famous ancient marts, in the day of their highest prosperity ; but Manchester cannot buy a blue and cloudless sky and perpetual sunshine ; and consequently I suppose Manchester will remain to the end of the chapter wealthy and busy but dingy and dreary to boot.

FEAST OF ST. PARTRIDGE AT PARK HALL

I KNEW Lord Warrenton at Oxford. When he came to his heritage he did not forget the acquaintance; and as sure as September arrives, it finds me duly celebrating the Feast of St. Partridge on the Park Hall estate.

My companions-in-arms this year were Stephen Miller, Esq., Q.C., Mr. Gordon, the artist (whose "Corsicans" created such a sensation three years ago), Young Marston, Earl Veringo's son, and the Rev. Martin Masters, vicar of Littleton.

We met at breakfast at the early hour of half-past seven, and talked of guns, and birds, and dogs, over savoury omelettes, game-pie, stewed grouse, dry toast, claret-cup, and coffee. Lord Warrenton has fits of gout, and we see nothing of him till dinner. Young Marston speedily discovered, and with lively horror, that the Vicar shot with a muzzle-loader.

"When I was a young fellow," replied the Vicar, "the pleasure of hunting, as well as shooting, was combined in the celebration of St. Partridge. We did not shoot for the gratification of killing birds only. We thought nothing of walking twenty miles for ten or a dozen brace."

"Didn't you, by Jove!" exclaimed the Hon. Mr. Marston. "Had you no drivers?"

"We drove our own game, sir," said the Vicar. "We hunted it fairly, and shot it well in the open."

"A dozen brace of birds! Why, on the first, last year," said young Marston, "I was four hours in one piece of turnips, and shot to a single dog one hundred and fifty head of game. I had a dozen fellows driving, two or three on horseback."

"That was simply murder," said the Vicar quietly. "To shoot in that fashion is to degrade sport into mere butchery."

The Hon. Mr. Marston did not relish this remark half so well as stewed grouse; but he only smiled, and said it was all very well for persons to preach that kind of thing.

"You both leave out the stimulant to the sportsman of the natural love of nature, which is inherent in all of us: autumn tints and breezes, crackling stubble, dewy root-crops, about which our literary friends talk so much in September," remarked Mr. Gordon. "All this must constitute part of the charm of shooting."

"To a painter, no doubt," said the Q.C. "The pleasure of shooting is made up of a combination of causes; and perhaps a love of nature may form an *infinitesimal* portion of one of these causes. But

the vanity of skill as a shot, the excitement of letting off your piece, the exercise of man's animal desire to slay, also enter very largely into that miscellaneous combination."

"And the happy release from professional labour," I ventured to remark; "letting the mind lie fallow; and then the glorious physical exercise."

"All very well, no doubt, and philosophical. But time's up; yonder is old Dick the keeper, with the dogs; so we had better make a move."

The fine leafy Worcestershire elms stood up in the early morning, throwing pleasant shadows athwart field and hedgerows; a light mist floated about the distant hills; rosy apples hung in clusters from bending trees; sparkling gems covered the dark-green leaves of the mangel-wurzel and the turnip. There were red berries on nearly every bush, and the first faint tinge of autumn toned down into an exquisite picture the varied and varying landscape.

There could not be a more charming bit of park and hill than that which stretched out from the terrace of the hall. The house is in the Italian style, quite a modern building, with every thing modern and elegant about it inside and out. Standing on the terrace, I say there can be nothing finer. The park begins at your feet its career of rich turf and clumps of trees and frisky deer, and finishes on the top of the Berne-hills, which mount up to the sky, green and fertile and beautiful, as the reflection in the lake on the right fully testifies.

Our party separated at starting. The Q.C., the Artist, and the Hon. Mr. Marston did the lowland, whilst I and the Vicar took the southern portion of the hill; all agreeing to meet at two for luncheon by the lake.

The keeper's son George, a smart little fellow, went with us. I carried my own breech-loader, and the Vicar his own muzzle-gun. George had a spare piece, in order that the Vicar might not extend the "down-charge" any longer than was necessary.

"Mark! Fourteen birds. I've watched them this month past," whispered George, gazing after a handsome-looking covey which one of our dogs, ranging too far, had unduly disturbed. Meanwhile, however, the second dog started a brace of hares, which were well brought down—one by the Vicar, and one by myself. In a few minutes we were blazing away in the turnips. The Vicar had the first double-shot, the birds flying full over his head, and he missed. I had a smart right-and-left shot, and killed. The remaining birds went clean away. The Vicar was displeased at missing.

"I was over-anxious on account of the muzzle-loader. One never ought to fire when the birds are coming with the wind fairly in your teeth. The plan is to turn round upon them and get a steady long shot."

The dogs began to draw in the next field, which was stubble, and presented us with an hour's capital sport; and after working a rough piece of gorse, more stubble, and some standing barley, we finished the southern part of the hill, bagging six-and-twenty head of game.

The wind was a little higher than we desired, but it was delightfully bracing; and the atmosphere being particularly clear, we had continually before us and within sight a magnificent extent of country, not unlike one of Turner's landscapes.

The Vicar was full of anecdote when we reached the short cut over the bridle-road leading to the lake. "A friend of mine, a queer, good-natured old boy," he said, "has a crotchet for making his man agree with every opinion he may express, however extravagant it may be. Half valet, half butler, his man is continually with him, the queer old fellow being a confirmed invalid. He rarely keeps a man six months, because they cannot fall into his crotchet. He has an Irishman now, however, who seems likely to stay with him. The old boy put Sandy to a severe test, and Ireland came out of it well. It was a particularly boisterous day. There is a mere capful of wind to-day to what there was on the stormy day when Sandy's efficiency was put on trial. 'There is not much wind to-day, Sandy,' said the master. Sandy hesitated, but he was not lost. 'I said there was not much wind to-day,' repeated the master emphatically. 'No, your honour,' said Sandy, 'not much; what there is is uncommon high, to be sure.'"

The story was appropriate, and amused young Marston immensely over lunch. The Q.C., the Artist, and the heir to the earldom of Vernigo had bagged one hundred and ninety-five head of game, including sixty brace of birds. They had had the assistance of beaters, who had driven the game since early morning. The Vicar insisted that this was seriously bordering on the murderous phase of modern sporting, and the controversy became a little hot, when Mr. Marston hit the Vicar slyly upon the unclerical character of a shooting parson.

"Ah," said the Vicar, "that reminds me of a little incident which occurred in the early life of my worthy diocesan. He was a shooting parson. When he was visiting Lady Hadley—she is very evangelical, you know—he proposed to join her son on a little shooting expedition. The old lady remonstrated mildly, but at length sought consolation in the belief that out of evil would come good. Thomson, her keeper, was not at all up to her religious standard; so she urged the bishop to say a few good words of exhortation to the man when they were in the fields together. His lordship took an opportunity on the return homewards to advise Thomson to go to church regularly and read his Bible. 'Why, I do read my Bible,' said the man; 'but I don't find in it any mention of the apostles going a-shooting.' 'No, my good man, you are right; the shooting was very bad about Palestine, and they went fishing instead.'"

Young Marston insisted upon shaking hands with the Vicar after this, and we finished our light luncheon in perfect harmony, as the freemasons say. Sherry, and sandwiches of ham and of potted lobster, and cold venison pasty, with a finishing draught of Allsopp's pale ale, are not at all *bad viands after four hours' shooting*.

The drag came for us at three o'clock, and we all went to the north of the hill, where we shot in company, and had lively sport. Old Markham says that from three until six is the best time of day (in the early part of the season) for shooting partridge. Going out first thing in the morning, as many sportsmen do, the birds are seldom found to lie well. They are on their feed, and by your springing them from the run the covey are pretty sure to take wing altogether; and being once disturbed in this state, it becomes afterwards much more difficult to disperse them than if they had been left quiet till the dew had dried on the stubble. Secondly, you throw off with long shots instead of fair ones. Thirdly, for one who may have no relay of pointers or setters, it should be recollected how much better bestowed would be the work which he takes out of them while slaving to little purpose in the dew of the morning, if he reserved it for the afternoon. Experience tells me that Markham is right. At Park Hall, where the game is strictly and carefully preserved and regularly fed, you are sure to have good shooting at any hour; but in a country unpreserved it is a mistake to begin work early in the day.

Occasionally the sport about Berne Hills is varied with deer-stalking on a small scale. Whenever any stray deer leave the herd and escape into the adjoining country, they usually take to the hill. This afternoon the keeper had a rifle slung over his shoulder, in case we came upon a couple of bucks which had been at large for several weeks. After two hours' good shooting in some standing barley, whereby we had considerably increased our bag, we went for a piece of long grass and brushwood, where two separate coveys had been marked down. We bagged ten brace here, sixteen birds being down before one was picked up. As we were leaving this for "fresh fields and pastures new," a significant "hush" came from the keeper, coupled with a downward movement of the right hand. We crouched behind a favouring bank the keeper passed the rifle to Marston, the dogs were held back by George. The next moment there was a crashing amongst the branches about a hundred and fifty yards ahead of us, and out bounded a remarkably fine buck. Marston swung the rifle to his shoulder, the sharp crack of the piece struck harshly on the ear, and the fine antlered brute sprang forward spasmodically and fell, the keeper enthusiastically commending the shot. The ball had entered just beneath the left eye penetrating the brain, and death was instantaneous.

We all agreed that this exciting and somewhat unexpected incident ought to be the *finale* of our day's sport. A halt was called accordingly, and we finished our sherry with a toast. We drank young Marston's health. In reply he said he thought speeches confounded nonsense, but if we liked he would sing us a song. We did like, of course, and he at once commenced to mark the deer in the forest dark and to chase the bounding elk, with a ho-oh-oh-oh-oh; in which latter *exercise* he requested us to join. The last echoes of our chorus died

musically away amongst the hills, and then we made up our united bag, which was,

Partridges	150 brace.
Hares	98
Rabbits	60
Woodpigeons	20
Deer	1

We had a two-mile walk to the Hall, during which the Q.C. took up the anecdotic running. He had been grouse-shooting in Ireland, at Lord Powley's place.

"There were eight of us in all," he said, "and only one dress-coat amongst us. They tried me by court-martial for wearing this one at our first dinner; and all my pleading did not save me from conviction. Not a black coat was seen afterwards. It was thorough swell Bohemianism. I was the only fellow there who had not his own servant with him, and yet there was not a carpet in the house. We dined in shooting-coats, smoked clays, cutties, and cigars, and drank Irish whisky for dessert."

I confess I preferred Park-Hall fashion to that of the Irish shooting-box. Potass water and sherry, a warm bath, and an entire dress change for dinner, was decidedly pleasant after our labours. Lord Warrenton presided at dinner; on his right and left were his merry daughter and the Vicar's wife. At the other end sat Lady Warrenton with the Q.C.'s better half, and her ladyship's niece from Devonshire. Did you ever taste grouse soup? black game with oysters and cayenne? partridge stuffed and stewed in claret? the same boiled like rabbits and smothered in onion-sauce? These were amongst our game-dishes, and were capital.

When tea was announced at nine, Lady Warrenton insisted upon Mr. Gordon telling that capital story about Lord Palmerston. She was sure nobody present had heard it.


"It looks so much like blowing one's own trumpet," said the Artist.

"Never mind that, Mr. Gordon," said her ladyship; "your trumpeters are a very numerous body, so you need not fear a small flourish on your own account; we shall relish the music none the less."

"It was before I had made a name," said Mr. Gordon, looking round the room in true story-teller style. "I had exhibited for several years, but without any particular success. One year, however,—the year before I painted 'The Corsicans'—Lord Palmerston took a sudden fancy to my picture called 'Summer in the Lowlands,' and bought it at a high figure. His lordship at the same time made inquiries after the artist, and invited me to call upon him. I waited upon his lordship accordingly: he complimented me upon the picture; but there was one thing about it which he could not understand. 'What is that, my lord?' I asked. 'That there should be such long grass in a field where there are so many sheep,' said his lordship promptly, and with

a merry twinkle of the eye. It was a decided hit this, and having bought the picture and paid for it, he was entitled to his joke. 'How do you account for it?' he went on, smiling, and looking first at the picture and then at me. 'Those sheep, my lord,' I replied, 'were once turned into that field the night before I finished the picture.' His lordship laughed heartily, and said 'Bravo!' at my reply, and gave me a commission for two more pictures; and I have cashed since then some very notable cheques of his,—dear old boy!"

It occurs to me that as the fall of the buck before Marston's rise was thought to be a good finish to our first day's sport, Gordon's little story will be the best clasp to this paper; so I will join Lady Wrenton at whist against the Parson and Mrs. Q.C.; and trust to the generous consideration of the Editor of *Belgravia* for the due publication of these notes on the Festival of St. Partridge at Park Hall.



SLAIN AT SADOWA

(The following incident has been reported in the *Daily Telegraph's*
Correspondence.)

THE cannon were belching their last
O'er the fields where the routed were flying,
And shouting pursuers strode fast
Through the heaps of the dead and the dying.

War's rage was beginning to wane ;
The fierce cared no longer to strike ;
And the good stooped to soften the pain
Of victors and vanquished alike.

A yellow-haired Austrian lad
Lay at length on a shot-furrowed bank ;
He was comely and daintily clad
In the glittering dress of his rank.

Not so white, though, his coat as his cheek,
Nor so red the sash crossing his chest
As the horrible crimson streak
Of the blood that had welled from his breast.

His foes approached where he was laid,
To bear him in reach of their skill ;
But he murmured, " Give others your aid ;
By our Fatherland ! let me lie still."

At dawn they came searching again,
To winnow the quick from the dead ;
The boy was set free from his pain,
And his faithful young spirit had fled.

As they lifted his limbs from the ground,
To hide them away out of sight,
Lo ! under his bosom they found
The *flag he had borne* through the fight.

SLAIN AT SADOWA

He had folded the silk he loved well,
Lest a shred should be seen at his side :
To wave it in triumph he fell ;
To save it from capture he died.

The head of the sternest was bared
As they gazed on the shot-riven rag,
And the hand of the hardest spared
To make prey of that Austrian flag.

O'er the tomb of their brother they bowed,
With a prayer for a spirit as brave ;
And they gave him the flag for a shroud
In his narrow and nameless grave.

BLOMFIELD JACKSON, M.A.

THE IRON CASKET

A Tale of the Trabaux Fortés

IN THREE PARTS

PART THE FIRST

THE early autumn days are very beautiful at Boulogne-sur-Mer. The little town is picturesque at all times, but especially when the clearer colder lights and deeper shadows of autumn bring out its irregularities of form and its caprices of colour; when the high wind drives the fleecy clouds rapidly across the sky, leaving huge rifts through which one looks up at the immense height of the blue dome, so tranquil, so majestically far above their restless shifting motion. The steepness of the streets, the sharp outlines of the houses, the clearly-defined hue of the coast, the tumult of the sea, the quietude of the old gray ramparts, the dignity with which the dome of the cathedral, and the square tower of the ancient Norman keep rear themselves above the gigantic walls—are most effective in the fall of the year; that solemn and poetic season, in which the fulness of the life of nature and the process of its decay are alike present and alike beautiful.

The season had been an unusually fine and pleasant one at Boulogne-sur-Mer in 1864, and the pilgrimages to the famous shrine of Notre Dame de Boulogne, which so strongly attract the curiosity and excite the surprise of the English visitors, had been particularly numerous and gay. In addition to those attractions, a famous preacher had been holding forth, evening after evening, for a month, at the Cathedral; his sermons had been eagerly listened to by crowds of residents and visitors, and his fire, eloquence, and earnestness had furnished a theme for conversation among all classes in Boulogne, and were regarded with wondering admiration by Catholics and Protestants alike. The eloquent and popular Dominican had returned to the retirement of his convent at Paris, and I heard of him every where, but had arrived too late to profit by the charm and power of his oratory. I had no distinct notion of the routine of a Dominican monk's life, and I felt some curiosity respecting the man to whom universal report assigned such variety of talents. On such a fine autumnal evening as I have described, it chanced that I was a listener to a conversation in which the celebrated Dominican was discussed from various points of view. One spoke of his learning and eloquence, and of the sunny frankness, ease, and good humour of his manners; another dwelt particularly on his kindness, on his interest in children, and wound up by a sentence

which surprised me not a little: this lady said, "He is the most amusing man I ever met in my life." Then came the testimony of the children. The monk had joined with the utmost zest in their *jeux innocents*; he was a master of the art of proverbs and charades, spoke naturally in *calembours*, and made *bouts rimés* faster than they could follow him. I wondered much at all this; there was something in it so different from any thing I had ever fancied about the life of a priest, and especially about the life of a monk; and I was yet more surprised when I learned that the Dominican in question was an accomplished musician, and a well-known contributor to the religious and critical literature of the day. From this special theme, the conversation wandered to the lives and experiences of the foreign clergy in general; and I gave expression to my ideas of the solitude, the hardness, and the apathy of these existences, whose real conditions were unknown to me. I had often mused upon the terrible knowledge of evil which the performance of a priest's duty brings with it, and wondered whether, in all but callous hearts, the faculty of happiness must not be destroyed by such knowledge. In a modified degree, all who have passed earliest childhood share it; but to them it is possible to keep aloof from it in a great measure; there must be more or less of free-will, of choice, in our acquisition of such knowledge; there must be voluntary application of our powers of observation to the developments of evil around us; but this is not a priest's case. I had said something on this matter, and a gentleman who was present replied to my observation:

"Père M—— would have convinced you," he said, "that the life of the cloister is not necessarily a gloomy one. I never saw a man who loved life more. He is just thirty-six; and I heard him say he hoped the good God would grant him thirty-six years more, to serve Him in this world, before He calls him to see Him in the next."

"Thirty-six years more!" I said, in amazement; "a monk wish for thirty-six years more of an existence which seems to me like a life of despair!"

"Do you then believe that there is, that there can be any such thing?" asked Mr. K—— seriously. "Let us pass by the question of monastic life for a moment, and consider that of the life of men in the world, sinful men, even impenitent men. Is there any such possibility as a life of despair?"

"Assuredly there is," I answered. "There are lives which have exhausted the resources of calamity; there are lives marked by every variety of suffering—by disappointment, by bereavement, by desertion, loneliness, calumny, gross injustice. Are not such lives, as well as those which are filled with crime, lives of despair?"

"No," he said; "certainly not. There is no place for despair as an abiding feeling in the human heart. But your remarks, expressive of a feeling which is very natural, until one has studied the sterner

aspects of life more closely than it is one's custom to do, have awakened a recollection in my mind which has a close bearing upon the subject from which our conversation has strayed—the experiences of the priesthood.”

“I have often thought what they must be,” I said; “but I have never had an opportunity of learning any facts. That the life of conscientious priests must be stern and sad, must, I think, be beyond dispute.”

“True,” he answered, “but full of consolation too. Shall I tell you a story told me by a Jesuit priest, a story which has a strange bearing on the question with which our digression began;—that of the possibility of a life of despair?”

I assented joyfully, and my friend left the room for a few minutes. When he returned he brought with him a closely written manuscript, which he adjusted for reading, while he spoke as follows:

“Perhaps the saddest and hardest part of that life which you think so sad and so hard—the life of the priesthood and the cloister—is its large, constant, and inevitable contact with crime. Every human existence has points of contact with evil, many with crime and misery. The lawyer and the physician can tell their stories of the hardening, the depressing influence of such contact; but their experiences fade into insignificance in the presence of those of the priest. And, while the ordinary routine of his calling brings every priest into constant inexorable collision with that mystery of iniquity, which dishonours the Creator, and renders His creatures wretched, that contact is doubly intimate, and infinitely more painful, when his lot is cast among the avowedly criminal classes. There is no more severe trial, there is no sterner experience than the life of a priest whose penitents are *forçats*, whose sphere of duty is the *chiourmes*. He sees crime there, not, as it were, accidentally—under a decent social veil, lifted before him alone—not hedged about with discreet silence, not casual; but in all its coarseness and indecency, in all its irrational folly, in all its nude inconsequence. There sympathy must keep silence, and compassion seek no expression of its pangs. There dread expiation treads its monotonous round, and men's hearts, black with unrepented crime, writhe under the sense of helplessness forced upon them by the irresistible arm of systematic punishment. There men cease to be individuals, and become items in a total, portions of a system, joints in a machine; there rage is impotent, hatred is harmless, vengeance is impossible, free-will is abrogated, pride is extinguished in the dead level of an equality of contempt, and a perfectly-adjusted apportionment of suffering. Impulse is fruitless, and rebellion is absurd.

“There is but one man to whom the *forçat* is a *man*, not an item, not a cipher; one man to whom he is the image of God, horribly defaced, blasphemously desecrated, but still the image of God; one man to whom he is not an enslaved body, a toiling compound of flesh

and blood, which must work, and eat, and sleep, and keep silence, with automaton-like submission to the supreme authority of organisation, but an immortal soul, the question of whose penitence or impenitence is of sufficient importance to occupy the attention of the Holy Trinity:—this one man is the chaplain to the *chiourmes*.

“It chanced, a few years ago,” continued Mr. K., “that I associated for some time pretty frequently with a priest who had been for several years at Toulon, working among the *forçats* there. He was a grave, learned, elderly man, and his countenance and manner alike bore the impress of the painful and laborious life he had led for so long, and the depressing associations with which he had been surrounded. Much of our conversation naturally turned upon the system of the *travaux forcés*, on the efficacy of the punishment there, in a reformatory sense, on the various effects on the minds of the criminals of their comparative degrees and terms of punishment, and on his own experiences in his priestly capacity, in the *città dolente*, among the *perdula gente*.

“If a life of despair were indeed a possibility, it might surely be found among the convicts condemned à *perpétuité* to the *travaux forcés*. I was not so confidently certain then, as I am now, that there is no such possibility; and I often questioned the priest on the condition of these unhappy men. He told me much that was painful to hear, painful to think of; little that I could repeat to you here; but invariably this: that those *forçats*, who, being desperate ruffians when their punishment (destined to be of life-long duration) begins, remain ruffians, are they who never lose the hope of effecting a successful evasion. You will say, then, that the men who cease to entertain such a hope sink down into mere listless brutal apathy, into the mechanical obedience of fear; and so realise your theory of a life of despair. But it is not so. Among these hopeless ones, Père Rougemont told me he numbered some very sincere penitents, who fulfilled their expiatory task with no mere sullen acquiescence, but with resigned and cheerful humility; while those who had neither hope of release in this world, nor heavenly irradiation of the darkness of their merited lot, became reconciled in time; and laboured on, for the most part cheerfully, though with occasional fierce bursts of anguish and wrath, which lessened in number and intensity as time wore away.

“Among his unhappy charges, one attracted the attention of Père Rougemont in no ordinary degree. No. 608 was a tall, spare, strong-looking, middle-aged man, with an intelligent countenance, and without the habitually downcast and sullen expression familiar to those who are accustomed to see the faces of criminals daily. Something thoughtful, self-contained, and even elevated in his look, something patient in his attitude, together with the serious attention, quite apart from the decorum exacted by routine, which this man exhibited at the religious

services and instructions, struck the Jesuit as very unusual in such a place, and sufficiently remarkable to have been observed in any. He inquired, after the limited fashion in which inquiry is possible at the *chiourmes*, and found that No. 608 was among the life-sentences, and that he bore a good character; had never been *inscrit*; and though considered *maussade* by his companions, it was easy to ascertain that this opinion was founded upon his reticence, decency of language, and pious observances. Père Rougemont observed No. 608 still more closely, and wondered at the apparent contradiction between his character and the crime which had brought so fearful a punishment. This crime was of a serious nature—it was robbery with attempted assassination; a kind of violence far from uncommon among the French peasantry.

“Another point of singularity about the convict No. 608 impressed itself upon Père Rougemont; and in order to understand how eminently it was calculated to do so, you must try to realise for a moment what it must be to listen to the confessions of the *forçats*. It is an experience which leaves its mark on a priest's whole life; it is full of unspeakable sadness, of the temptation to despair. Things which are ‘not to be spoken of among Christians’ are familiar to the wretched dwellers in those dark places of the earth; and nowhere is the holy power of religion more heavily taxed, as nowhere are its consolations more sorely needed. No. 608 was a regular attendant at the confessional; and each time, as the man retired, with a bowed head and a tranquil heart, from the presence of the priest, he left him more and more wondering and perplexed. What were the revelations made by this violent ruffian, this crime-stained wretch, whose life was doomed to pass away in the prolonged punishment of a *forçat's* expiation? Occasional distractions in prayer, transitory lapses from charity towards his fellows, impatience under their insults, anger and disgust at their foul language, self-condemnation because his cheerful acquiescence in his doom sometimes flagged. Beyond such self-accusation the confidences of the *forçat* never went. At length Père Rougemont told the man with what amazement he regarded him, and its origin. Partly moved by an irresistible desire to know more of this strange penitent, so unlike his fellows, and partly by the fear which, nevertheless, he instinctively rejected, that the man's confessions might be insincere, might be sacrilegious, he told him that the irreconcilable difference between the state of his conscience and his position as a criminal of the gravest degree troubled him, and pressed him to give an explanation.

“No. 608 complied, though not without hesitation. ‘I will tell you my history, my father,’ he said; ‘though I could tell it to none but you, lest the long lesson of my life should be unlearned through such a confidence.’

“The tale which Père Rougemont then heard he wrote down with

only the necessary changes of name and place; and as he gave the into my temporary keeping, I transcribed and will now read it to you.

'My native village,' said No. 608, 'was a poor place, and we were all poor people there. It lay close to the sea, on one of the barest and most inhospitable of the northern coasts. We were not unhappy though we lived as we worked, hard; but we were proud and ignorant and religion had failed to recover her footing amongst us. The hardness of heart and deadness of faith which had come upon France in the days of our fathers held us in their bonds, and we left religion to the men who are never satisfied for long without it—the women. My father died when I was a child; and my sister and myself were brought up strictly and laboriously by my mother. She was a stern, sensible woman, over whose earlier life the storm of the Revolution had blown. She and my father had been confidential servants in the employ of a great nobleman; and for some time had been in imminent danger of sharing the fate of their master and his proud and beautiful daughter who died by the guillotine in the first days of the Terror. But there was some little safety in insignificance in that dreadful time; and my father and mother were spared,—overlooked perhaps. Sorrow and fear had early set their mark upon my mother; and poverty deepened it. After my father's death, her rare smiles became rarer; and as a truth our poor home had little to lighten it, save Aline's beauty. She was beautiful indeed,—a tall, graceful, dark-eyed, dark-haired woman whose loveliness hard work and the uncared-for life of a poor village could not injure. As soon as she was able to stand at the iron table, my mother made her share her labour; she was the laundress the village boasted, and her chief livelihood was derived from the Château de Corandeuil, the sole seigneurial residence in the miles around. I worked in the village smithy; and I too was frequently employed at the château, for I was ingenious and handy, and had a good deal of time to spare. Some of our pleasantest hours were those we passed together, in going to and returning to Corandeuil; Aline with some article of dress, a white gown or coat amply stiffened and dazzlingly white, hung from a long staff over her shoulder, and I with my bag of tools in my hand.

'The Château de Corandeuil was a league's distance from the village and by so much farther inland. In old days it had been a splendid place, and it had external grandeur still. The great gates of wrought iron opened on a smooth expanse of greensward, bounded on three sides by the centre and the wings of the vast building, and divided by a wide carriage-way of fine yellow gravel, which led to the entrance by a wide doorway of carved oak, reached by a flight of flat, broad marble steps, and shaded by a splendid baldaquin, also of carved oak which had been brought from a Flemish town in the time of the wars. It was a still and silent place in my boyhood; for the château was a widow; the Revolution, which had spared her life, had sh-

husband, and diminished her fortune to a maintenance too modest to permit her to keep up her former state.

‘Madame de Corandeuil had two children, a boy and girl, of the same age as myself and Aline. The establishment at the château consisted of Jean Comel, the steward; a tutor for the young count, whose title, however, was laid aside during his boyhood; a femme-de-chambre named Clémence Dervaux, who was Aline’s particular friend, though her senior by several years; and a few domestics of various grades. Life at the château was not much less dull than life at the village; but at least they knew more there of what was going on in the world than we did; and after my return from a few hours’ work at Corandeuil, I was looked upon with curiosity and interest, as the bringer of news from a system of things far outside of ours.

‘Eugène de Corandeuil was a fine handsome youth, with all the personal beauty and but little of the offensive pride of his race. His comparative poverty and his mother’s prejudices had combined to keep him in retirement. He disliked the Empire, but he chafed very little, if at all, under the necessity which held him back from the great world of Paris. He was a student and, though in a less degree, a sportsman. He was affable and considerate to all his inferiors, and was beloved by his dependants, with one exception. This exception was Charles Comel, the son of the steward, a lad a little younger than the Count and myself. A fierce quarrel, which had its origin in an act of cruelty to a pet dog committed by Charles when they were little more than children, had resulted in bitter and vindictive hatred on the part of Comel, and in indifference, too indifferent to be disdainful, on that of the young Count. Between Eugène de Corandeuil and his mother perfect sympathy and affection existed, and they were closely united in loving solicitude for the remaining member of the little family circle, Isabelle de Corandeuil, who was blind. This young lady was younger than her brother, and had been born a few weeks subsequent to her father’s death.

‘I need tell you little of the affairs at the Château de Corandeuil. The blind girl loved Aline much; she could not, indeed, see her beauty, which year by year increased, but she could appreciate her high spirit, her quick wit, her resolute nature, and that dauntless courage and endurance which contrasted so markedly with her own timid and yielding disposition; as strangely as her fair tresses, pale cheeks, and sightless blue eyes contrasted with the radiant and dominant, the passionate and stern beauty of Aline. Time passed, and my sister and I were left alone. Our mother died just as the news of the abdication of the Emperor had reached our remote village. We were not ardent politicians, and we had not felt very strongly on the matter, except when the Conscription pressed heavily upon us. Many of our companions had left us, never to return; their bones were whitening on distant battle-fields, and their places knew them no

more. The only person of our little society who was really enthusiastic in the cause of Napoleon was Charles Comel, and he bewailed the abdication and the restoration very bitterly. With the restoration came new life and movement at the château. Madame de Corandeuil resolved to proceed to Paris immediately, to present her son, by the title of his ancestors, to the legitimate sovereign of France; and the young Count, nothing loth, communicated to me his approaching departure, and his determination to enter the army, now that the lilies of France were once more displayed upon the immemorial standard. Eugène de Corandeuil was twenty-three years old at this time, and in the prime of manly strength and beauty. Before she left the château Madame la Comtesse had taken Aline into her service, on the death of our mother, and assigned to her the duty of attending on Mademoiselle Isabelle. Our little village home was dismantled. I resided with my employer; and as I added some of the finer processes of a smith's work to my former avocation, I began to earn a little more than the bare subsistence to which I had been so long limited. I seldom went to the château now to see my sister, but she frequently came half-way to the village to meet me, when my day's work was done, and the femme-de-chambre had replaced her with her young mistress. Our place of meeting was in a dreary spot enough; but all the face of the country about there was dreary;—it was a ruined mill, under the walls of which ran a swift and deep but narrow stream. Some heavy stones had fallen from the ruin so long before, that they were stained and grass-grown, and on them Aline and I used to sit in the evenings, during the short time she permitted herself to remain absent from her helpless charge.

‘I must now tell you what manner of persons my sister and myself were at this time. She was, as I have said, beautiful; a woman of the stern imposing presence and dauntless resolution which had made so many of her sisterhood heroic in those terrible days of which the story had been familiar to us from our infancy. She was not ignorant, and neither was I; but I did not care for reading, while books were her delight. I think she had inspired Mademoiselle de Corandeuil with the love of them, and the greater portion of her time was passed in reading aloud to her afflicted charge. Aline had great talents, and was in every respect above her position in life. I have said our little village society was not a religious one, and in this that of the château resembled ours, for no one within its walls cared about religion. Aline, in particular, plunged into the atheistical literature of the period and of the century with avidity; and though I knew nothing of it, my ignorance arose from no conscientious scruples, but only from want of taste. I lived a careless, immoral life: the pleasures within my reach were not many, and they had little but their sinfulness to recommend them; but, such as they were, I accepted them readily enough; and knowing that my work was conscientiously done, I thought of, I be-

lied in, no higher duty. My most intimate and constant associate was Charles Comel, who was frequently present at my wayside interviews with Aline, and of whose admiration for her I began to conceive some suspicions shortly after she had gone to reside at the château. I told these suspicions to my sister; reminded her, that as neither of them had any means, and old Jean Comel was renowned for his love of money, his stinginess to his son, and his general arbitrariness, a marriage between them would be impossible. Aline received my representations without embarrassment—indeed she was never embarrassed—and replied to them frankly.

“Do not fear, Antoine,” she said; “I have no wish to marry Charles Comel.”

“But you know he loves you, my sister.”

“I know it,” she said; “but I repeat, I shall never marry him. I have far other designs than the wretched life of the village, or even the *servile* one of the château, for my future.”

While she spoke, a strange thrill in her voice struck me painfully, and I looked at her with wonder, as she sat on a block of stone, as proudly, as calmly, as gracefully, as a throned queen; and looked out straight towards the horizon, with a new expression in her stern dark eyes, and a purpose in each line of her handsome face. The next moment every feature softened, and she looked up with her rare, glancing smile, and greeted Comel, who had come up behind me in the short interval of silence. That night I felt uneasy and troubled; for I began to fear Aline loved this young man; and the resolution with which she had expressed herself disturbed me, even more than the contemplation of the hopelessness of the matter would have done, had her determination been different.

A short time passed, and news of a serious nature reached the château. The Countess had been attacked by a dangerous illness, and was to return to Corandeuil when her convalescence should render her removal possible. The Count had obtained a *congé*, and was to accompany her. In due time they came, and all the inhabitants of the château assembled at the grand entrance to receive them. Mademoiselle de Corandeuil awaited the arrival of her mother and brother, leaning on Aline's arm; and the most casual observer could hardly have failed to be struck by the contrast which the two girls presented; the one pale, *chétive*, insignificant, the other grandly, majestically, vigorously, almost audaciously beautiful. As Aline offered her respectful salutation to the Countess, releasing Isabelle's arm, that she might be folded in her mother's embrace, I saw two things. The first, that the young Count started perceptibly, and an expression of wondering admiration passed over his ingenuous features; the second, that a terrible and unmistakable change had come upon the Countess. It was impossible to tell by any look or gesture of hers, that Aline had recognised the presence of *Eugène de Corandeuil*. That evening my sister said to me,

"Antoine, Madame la Comtesse stayed too long in Paris."

"Why," said I; "do you think she is seriously ill?"

"She smiled strangely, and said, "She has come home to me. But I don't mean that only. M. le Comte has learned to have his own way *à bas*. He was a good boy enough here, and with a murmur would have married any little lady whom his mother should have disinterred from a convent for him. He has now rejected her choice; and when she is dead he will choose for himself, or, at least, he will believe that he does so." . . .

"The Countess de Corandeuil was dead within two months. I was Eugène was the infatuated slave of my sister Aline. At first I was struck by a kind of terror at so incongruous an attachment; but I lent myself unscrupulously to Aline's designs. I listened eagerly to her stories of the Count's protestations. I knew that he had resigned his commission in the king's army; and that he had abandoned himself to the passion which obscured his ambition, his family pride, and his duty, but itself. I had no fear for Aline. She did not love me, but she was inexorably resolved on forcing him to the desperate step of marrying her; he, the representative of one of the noblest families in the kingdom, a house whose alliances had been, in the time of its wealth and splendour, the special care of the sovereign of France. All this was, of course, gone by for ever; the Revolution had irrevocably destroyed much, and such privileges of rank and position among the ruins it had made; the Restoration was powerless to restore the aristocracy in the fulness of its power, its insolence, and its pretensions. Yet I doubted. When I spoke to Aline of my doubts, she listened with a contemptuous, insolent smile, and answered me that Charles Comel loved her I knew, and sometimes a vague suspicion would cross my mind that mischief would come of the two passions in his breast,—love for Aline, and hatred for the Count. But I hastened, as even then fate was hastening on towards me and my sister.

"Napoleon returned from Elba, and all France was seized with the fever of the Hundred Days. Charles Comel came to me in a state of frantic excitement, and told me that he was going to rejoin the army, rallying from every point around the irresistible Emperor. "Why should I stay here," he said, "with no prospect beyond waiting for a miserly old father's death, which may not take place until I have lost all chance of gaining any thing I care for? There is a career for every man in following the fortunes of the Emperor. In a few days, during which I saw nothing of Aline, he hastened to the village, and old Comel bewailed the loss of a son whom his avarice had driven to this desertion. It was some time since I saw Charles, and I had been together, and I had of late avoided speaking of him to the haughty and impatient girl.

"The Hundred Days were at an end; the allied sovereigns entered *in Paris*; and Eugène de Corandeuil had very reluctantly pro-



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thither, to pay his respects to the king, for the last time restored; when the news of Charles Comel's death reached his father. He had died of his wounds in a hospital at Brussels, having charged a wounded but convalescent comrade with two letters, which duly arrived at their destination. One was addressed to old Comel, and was affectionately worded. The son besought his father to seek consolation for his loss in giving me a place in his affections. "Antoine is my best friend," he said, "and will be to you a son." The other letter was addressed to Aline; but it was not until long afterwards that I learned the nature of its contents. I saw her on the day after she received it. She was quite calm; but there was not a trace of colour in her face, and on her brow a frown set fixedly, which never again left it. I began, naturally, to speak to her of the subject most in my thoughts; but she stopped me, with an imperative gesture. "Not now, Antoine. Sometime hence I shall have somewhat to say to you concerning Charles Comel. Until then keep silence." Repeating her former gesture, she left me.

From that time forth I was much with Jean Comel, and folks said it was easy to see who would be the next intendant at Corandeuil; and some even spoke with a sneering meaning of the favour in which Aline and myself were held. This in no wise troubled me; I doubted Aline's success in the difficult game she was playing; but I never feared for her safety, because I thoroughly understood her indifference to Eugène de Corandeuil.

It was yet early in the winter; and the Count de Corandeuil had gone into Brittany, after a short sojourn at the château; when one night, after the woman who cleaned the house in which the old smith and I lived, had gone away, and I was alone in the little kitchen behind the shop, a cautious knock at the door attracted my attention. I withdrew the bolt, and beheld Aline, wrapped in a large mantle, its hood being drawn over her head, and under which her face, ghastly in its pallor, and yet lighted up by a fierce and terrible excitement, looked out at me with a gaze which almost turned me to stone. She was supporting herself against the door with one hand, which, with the outstretched arm, was the only part of her form visible. I placed my arm round her to lead her into the house, but she threw it off, and crossed the threshold with a firm step. I followed her, and she said, "Bolt the door."

I obeyed. She seated herself in old Pierre's arm-chair, still shrouded in the folds of her heavy mantle.

"The old man asleep?" she asked.

"Yes, Aline. But, in the name of Heaven, what brings you here, and what has happened?"

"I began to shake off the fascination of surprise and apprehension which had held me silent, and questioned her eagerly.

"I don't come in the name of Heaven," she said, in a cold sneering

tone and with a ghastly smile; "I come on a terrible errand. Sit down, Antoine, and hear me; but first give me wine—good wine, if you have it, and a morsel of bread. Be quick; I am faint."

'A violent shudder shook her as she spoke. She soaked some morsels of the bread in the wine which I hastened to set before her, and ate them eagerly; still using only one hand; still holding her mantle round her with the other. I sat and gazed at her face, on which mingled agony and resolution were visible.

"Listen to me," she said, in a voice which was not like hers as I had ever heard it. "You love me, Antoine, and I—I think I love you. I never feared any one, and I don't fear you. I told you I should one day speak to you of a man who is dead, and who wrote to me when he was dying. I am come here now to speak to you of him."

'She leaned forward, and her clenched hand rested heavily on the table.

"Charles Comel loved me, Antoine; and I loved him. You knew this, I suppose?"

'I made a gesture of assent.

"I knew there was one thing I loved better than him—my ambition; but I did *not* know, until he was dead and I had read his letter, that there was any thing he loved better than me. I deceived him, as I thought; poor fool that I was, not to know that a great passion, like that he nourished—not love, another, a greater—gives clear-sightedness, gives craft, gives caution, gives patience. I never meant to marry him; and I thought he did not know it; but I loved him. Stay, Antoine; read this, and see how I have been duped."

'She drew from her bosom, but with a cautious movement which still left her figure quite hidden, a coarse sheet of paper closely written over, and gave it to me. I read these lines, in Charles Comel's hand; they had been written with much difficulty, and evidently at different times.

"*Brussels.*—I am dying, Aline; and when you read these words I shall be dead. You can afford to forgive a dead man;—but, lest the vengeance for which I have so long waited and thirsted should be forfeited by any impulse of your grief, for your sake and mine I cannot permit you to cherish a delusion. I loved you, Aline; but I did not love you so much as I hated Eugène de Corandeuil. You loved me; but not so much as you loved your resolution to become a countess,—a resolution I never blamed, since it served my purposes. When you urged me to join the Emperor's army, as a means of rendering our marriage possible, I perfectly understood your design, and I acquiesced in it, because it suited my purpose to leave Corandeuil. I should have been happy to have made you my wife; but I was happier in reflecting that the Count de Corandeuil would make you his, after you had been my mistress. A very long score was wiped out in *this pleasant perspective*. I did not indeed reckon so confidently on

the sabres of these English, which have closed my accounts with all the world prematurely;—one cannot take every thing into account;—but, lest I should be deceived when I shall have no *partie en revanche* in my power, I tell you all the truth now. There is no safety in reckoning on events in which women are concerned, if one does not make sure that their hearts will not play one false. I remember the difficulty I experienced in getting your heart to betray your head, Aline; and I am therefore careful to provide against its possible treachery to my purposes, by any softness to my memory. Pray do not be false to the designs of years merely because they were my designs also; pray do not relinquish your own game because I too have played it, though not with *cartes sur table*. When I think that, had your resolution to resist only exceeded mine to conquer, Eugène de Corandeuil would have achieved a last triumph over me;—whereas I die with the consciousness that, if once more you are weak, I have at least ruined his dearest hopes and wrung his heart to the core; and if you are, as you will be, strong, I shall have sullied his honour and degraded his noble race,—I am inclined to bid this life a *petit bon jour* with much cheerfulness. Seriously, Aline, we are quits. You deceived me, and I deceived you. You have the best of it, for you are living, and may be Countess de Corandeuil; whereas I die, by English swords too, and can be nothing. For the little time that remains, however, I love you, Aline. Antoine is a *bon garçon*, but stupid. I hope my father will observe what I have said about him; and that thus, in a roundabout way, some of the money which you would never have taken from me may come to you. It comes from Corandeuil also, you know; and thus it will be yours in all fashions.

CHARLES COMEL."

"I read this terrible letter with mingled stupefaction and rage, and then fiercely asked Aline if what this man said was true?"

"Quite true, Antoine," she answered, in the same cold sneering tone. "Yes, he has his revenge; he has succeeded in his purpose. And I too will carry mine through. He might have allowed me to regret him," she said, with a momentary touch of sadness in her tone; "but he could not resist the boastfulness of his nature. Yes, I will be Countess de Corandeuil, and that soon. But you must help me."

"I, Aline! How can I help you, wretched child? You have ruined yourself; this must be known to some one who will bring it to the Count's ears, and then what becomes of your chance of a fine marriage?"

"God forgive me! This was my sole thought; I had no care for the ruined honour, the endangered soul of my sister.

"No," she said, "no, I am safe; there is no danger. Clémence knows indeed that I have had a lover, but she believes the Count to be he; and as she has taken it into her head latterly, since she has lost some of her teeth and her complexion, to become very *dévoté*, she will

see in this marriage only a reparation. Another victory for Charles Comel, if he knows it! But you must aid me, Antoine; and at once. Look here."

"She put aside the folds of her mantle, and showed me, held closely by her left arm across her bosom, the tiny form of a sleeping infant. I recoiled from the sight with an exclamation of horror; but she put her right hand on me, and pushed me down into my seat again.

"Listen," she said rapidly; and as she spoke her face grew paler and paler, and her eyes shone feverishly; while at almost every sentence she pressed the infant so strongly with her arm, that I was surprised it did not wake and cry. "I left the chateau this morning, on the pretext that you had sent for me, being ill. I felt that my hour had come. You know the ruined mill, Antoine, and the angle of the two walls which are yet standing. In that desolate spot I endured my anguish, quite alone. I need not tell you if it tried my courage to do that—but I had much to gain—most women have only sympathy and love, and win them best by weakness. My child was born in the twilight. I had made a little dress to cover it; and I fed it once from my bosom. Then, when I thought I might safely come through the village, sure that all would be within their miserable houses, I came on here."

"Good God, Aline!" I cried; "you have killed yourself. It is impossible that you can survive. And the child—did it not cry?"

"A new and ghastly suspicion crossed my mind. Was the child alive? Aline saw the thought and answered it.

"Don't be alarmed, Antoine; the child lives. But I had to take precautions against its being heard; and I dropped a little laudanum between its lips, when it had been fed and warmed. Here, bend your head, and you will see and hear its breathing."

"I leaned down to the rosy lips of the little creature, and I did feel the faint breath gently exhaled. I touched the forehead; it was damp, no doubt from the heat and want of air under Aline's mantle.

"There is not a moment to be lost, Antoine," said Aline; "you must go at once to V—, where you can procure a horse, and ride thence at full speed to L—." (She named a large city within twenty miles of our village.) "There is an asylum there for *enfants trouvés*. You have but to leave your horse at an auberge and walk to the gate. When you ring, a basket will be let down; place my child in it,"—she winced for a moment, and ground her strong white teeth,—"*and take up the ticket with a number on it, which you will find in the basket. Then the basket will be drawn up, and you can return as speedily as possible. In the mean time I shall remain here; and my absence from the chateau will excite no comment. When the old woman comes in the morning, I shall tell her that I came to see you, and was too ill to return; and that you have gone to the chateau to carry my excuses to Mademoiselle. I will employ her and engage her attention; you will return as rapidly as possible, and though we must incur some risk,*

I think by carrying out this plan it will be confined to the danger of some of the people at the château discovering that you are not ill, and of old Madelon finding out that you did not go to Corandeuil,—discoveries which will trouble us little, as they will not reach the ears of Mademoiselle."

"There was an air of absolute command about Aline on all occasions; but now it became irresistible, and I had no thought of opposing her. I saw at a glance that as she said, and only as she said, this secret could be kept, and her scheme carried into effect. All my thoughts and feelings were in confusion; but Aline did not give me time to try and arrange them. "Time flies," she said, "and I *must* get some rest. Go, Antoine, and at once. I have counted on you, and have said nothing of reward. But, be assured, the Countess de Corandeuil will richly repay the devotion of her brother." Even in that moment of danger and of suffering the woman's voice was full of pride and boastfulness. "I have money," she continued. "*My wages*—I have not spent them; so pay well and have a good horse. You can say you go on pressing affairs for the Intendant of Corandeuil; and, indeed, your errand somewhat concerns Comel," she added, with slow bitterness, and a wan smile of self-mockery.

"I made my preparations to depart, put on strong shoes and a loose warm coat, and then approached Aline in silence. She rose, laid the sleeping infant on the cushion of her chair, and taking off a small woollen shawl she wore, knotted it firmly round my neck, under my coat, after the fashion of a sling. She then took up the child, still sleeping, and gazed at it very steadily.

"It is hard for you to part with the baby, Aline," I said; "take courage, my sister; he will be well cared for, and one day I will reclaim him."

"It would be harder, Antoine," she replied firmly, "if I had to regret his father also."

"This word showed me the depth of her passionate resentment more clearly than any she had yet spoken. She touched the infant's cheek with her finger, took his tiny hands in hers, and put them to her lips, kissed his damp brow, and without a tear laid him in the sort of hammock she had formed of the shawl hung round my neck. She then buttoned my coat at the throat and the waist, leaving the intervening space open, and placed my awkward arm in the proper position to support the infant.

"In another minute she had shut the door behind me.

"The night was dark and cold, and the wind swept over the high land through which my path to V—— lay, with an angry blustering voice. As I strode along, carrying my tranquil little burden, my thoughts began to arrange themselves, and I contemplated all the circumstances of the position in which Aline and I found ourselves. I felt no anger against her, though I reviled and execrated the dead.

man who had made her subservient to his purpose of revenge. I vaguely admired her courage, her marvellous physical endurance, her rapid mastery of the position, her facility of invention; and having reached this stage of reflection, I even began to wonder whether she had had any alternative resources in contemplation—what, for instance, she would have done, had the Count not been obliged to go to Brittany, or had she been unable to leave the château at an opportune moment.

‘After a while my thoughts became quite objectless and desultory, and then at last, and just as I was entering the little town of V—, where I intended to procure a horse, I began to think of the child. How soundly he slept, and how long! Two hours had elapsed since I had left our village, and my little burden had not stirred. The moon had now risen, and was casting a straggling light across my path. I stopped, and proceeded cautiously to look at the infant, carefully sheltering him at the same time from exposure to the cold. The face had a strange appearance, caused, as I thought at the first glance, by the ungenial light; but the next instant a horrible fear seized me. I snatched the babe from its warm covering, felt its limbs, and laid its face to mine. The tiny limbs, the waxen face, were cold, and almost stiff—my sister had ignorantly killed her child! The first shock of this fearful knowledge utterly overpowered me, and I sat down by the roadside, feeble and overwhelmed. My journey was needless now. What should I do? Dispose of the infant’s body, and return to Aline and tell her truth? No—she might not believe my story, she might believe me, and not herself, guilty of the child’s death. I was not willing to accept such a transfer of responsibility. How to dispose of the body, besides? I was on a bleak high-road; one of those pitiless shadeless roads common in the north of France. I was near to the town of V—; even at so late an hour I might be seen; the infant, did I abandon it on the road, might be found before I had reached home, and pursuit at once be instituted. I had no means of making a hole in the ground to serve as a grave, and I knew not whether there was a pit, a well, or a stream in the vicinity. As I thought thus, a sudden remembrance struck me—I knew now how I could dispose of the body of the infant. I rose instantly, buttoned my coat over the little corpse, which made me shudder by its harmless contact, and retraced my steps with all the expedition in my power. It was three o’clock when I reached the smith’s, and the darkness and silence were universal. I hoped Aline might be sleeping, and yet I feared that her repose might prevent her giving me admittance. I cautiously threw some earth against the window, and it was gently opened. I spoke at once, “It is I, Aline; open the door.”

‘She did so, but without bringing a light. I caught her hand, led her into the kitchen, and told her, as rapidly as I could, what had occurred. Her face was, of course, invisible, but she uttered a moan of mingled agony and weakness, and then kept silence. I struck

light, and when I looked at her I was shocked at her appearance. Her eyes were hollow, her cheeks pale and sunken, her lips bloodless. She sat in her chair huddled together, her hands hanging helplessly down. In this access of feebleness I foresaw the ruin of all our plans. I unfastened my coat, laid the little corpse upon her knees, beseeching her to rouse herself, and consider the immediate necessity for action. After the interval of a minute, she said,

"Why did you bring the baby back, Antoine?"

"I gave her all the reasons but one, and that one she divined.

"And because you fancied I might think you had completed my work. No, brother, if we must use the jargon of the fools around us, you and I are not good, but we are not so bad as to be able to kill a baby. My child has indeed died by my act, but not with my intention. And now, Antoine, where is it to be buried?"

"Even as she spoke, she forced herself back to her former composure, and began to straighten the little limbs and compose the dead infant's garments. I told her my plan, and she acquiesced silently. A small wooden box, in which a few candles of a better kind than those we ordinarily used were kept, stood in a press in my room. I folded a *foulard* of my own, after the fashion of a sheet, and placed it in the bottom of the box, then laid the little corpse in this rough resting-place. The mother sat by, silent, and with her face covered, until all was completed. I tied down the cover firmly with strong cord, to which I attached a piece of rough iron; then I threw Aline's mantle over my arm, and so hid my burden completely from view. We did not exchange a word, until I turned towards the door, when Aline said:

"I have told you that Clémence knows. She must believe the child lives, or she will believe that I have killed it, and her conscience will lead her to betray me, as it now persuades her to assist me. I must confide a numbered card to her safe-keeping. What shall the number be? Are there many *enfants trouvés* at L——?"

"I don't know."

"At the moment a number, roughly painted in blue upon the candle-box, caught my eye. It was 608.

"I will get a card written for you," I said; "M. le Vicaire writes them for the parish lotteries. We'll take 608." And I went out once more into the night. This time I turned my steps towards the road that led to Corandeuil, and went on until I was standing under the wall of the ruined mill, and close to the swift deep river. I stood upon one of the fallen stones, that had often served as a seat for Charles Comel, when he and I and Aline had met in that place together; and leaning forward, flung the box into the stream. I heard the dull splash, saw the shimmer of the parted waters in the moonbeams for a moment, and then the customary music of the rapid running river resumed its monotonous melody.

'Madelon was a cleanly, active, pious, deaf, and remarkably stupid old woman, and she accepted Aline's account of her presence at the smithy without either interest or suspicion. Old Pierre hardly noticed her, and did not ask any reason for her appearance. Aline remained three or four days with me, and then returned to Corandeuil. During that time she told me all that had passed between her and Eugène de Corandeuil, and how he, who was under no control but that of public opinion, was ready to set such restraint at defiance and marry her, and that she had even succeeded with difficulty in inducing him to postpone his happiness so long.

'Aline's influence was increased by her apparent disinterestedness. It was she who urged him to consider public opinion; she who reminded him of the splendid traditional alliances of Corandeuil. Then the young Count was ready to adopt imperialism, republicanism, any class of opinions which would not stand in the way of his marriage. This was the position of affairs before the Count's departure, and when he returned it continued the same. From the moment Aline left the smithy, though I saw her more frequently than before, she never by look or word recalled the incidents of that terrible night. She did not even tell me the nature or the extent of the communication she had found herself obliged to make to Clémence Dervaux;—but I felt no doubt that it had been discreetly made. When the young Count returned, which he did sooner than was expected, he was most open and incautious in his devotion to Aline. I was not spared many sneers and pretended warnings of friendship; but I disregarded them all, secure in my knowledge of Aline's firmness of purpose, and superiority of will and intellect to all who surrounded her. One day Aline came to me and confessed that I was her last and greatest difficulty. I was only the village smith, and the future châtelaine did not wish either to deny her brother a share in her elevation, or to attempt to induce her guests to accept him as their equal. There was no impulse about Aline; she foresaw every thing, and she calculated every thing. She was resolved that hers should be no barren triumph, that she would take her place as Countess de Corandeuil with as few drawbacks as possible to the grandeur of her position. She spoke to me quite candidly on this point, and I heard her quite patiently.

'We never met now by the ruined mill, but often at the château, whither I went in the evenings; and there Aline proposed to me that I should go away from the vicinity of Corandeuil until she should have secured an unassailable position for herself by her marriage with the Count. I assented; and having engaged a young man to replace me with Pierre Bonhard, and recommended Madelon to take especial care of the old man during my absence, I took leave of my sister, who supplied me with money, and turned my back on our village gladly enough. I was weary of the place and of the life I led there, and I longed for pleasures, which if not purer would be at least

and would not be put off. Sometimes I seemed to see the proud face of the dead Countess—who had been good and generous to other, who had been good and generous to me, who had taken from a life of toil, and the temptation and danger to which such exposes rustic beauty, and made her the confidential companion of an afflicted daughter—and in the glance of the disdainful eyes I saw menace and reproach for the shame which I had been instrumental in bringing on her beloved son, and on the cherished memories of his father's house. But when such fancies pained me, I forgot them in the dissipated pleasures in which I freely indulged.'



LOVE IN NOVEMBER

ON a terrace a moment we linger :
The woodlands are hidden in mist,
And numbed is my lady-love's finger,
Her lips are too iced to be kissed.
Scarce Love from that portal can flutter,
Which *sweetest* is marked in his chart :
Yet, though plaints of the weather lips utter,
Sweet eyes are as warm as sweet heart.
Still she says, " O my darling, remember,
If dreary and chill I appear,
I told you I thought that November
Was the very worst month in the year."

'Tis so, ah, my own ! yet 'tis *not* so :
November with visions is rife
Of the summer we all have forgot so,
Of spring that shall wake us to life.
Look back to the thrush and the starling,
The rose-petals reddening the grass,—
Look on to the violets, my darling,
Soon sweetening the lanes as we pass :
And kiss me—kiss close—and remember,
My beauty, my sweetheart, my dove,
That even in chilly November
There's summer on lips that can love.

MORTIMER COLLINS.





M. E. Edwards del.

THE QUIET FIGURE BY THE WINDOW.

BELGRAVIA

DECEMBER 1866

BIRDS OF PREY

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c

Book the First

FATAL FRIENDSHIP

CHAPTER V. THE LETTER FROM THE "ALLIANCE" OFFICE

UPON the evening of the day on which Mrs. Halliday and the dentist had discussed the propriety of calling in a strange doctor, George Sheldon came again to see his sick friend. He was quicker to perceive the changes in the invalid than the members of the household, who saw him daily and hourly, and he perceived a striking change for the worse to-night.

He took care, however, to suffer no evidence of alarm or surprise to appear in the sick chamber. He talked to his friend in the usual cheery way; sat by the bed-side for half-an-hour; did his best to arouse Tom from a kind of stupid lethargy, and to encourage Mrs. Halliday, who shared the task of nursing her husband with brisk Nancy Woolper—an invaluable creature in a sick-room. But he failed in both attempts; the dull apathy of the invalid was not to be dispelled by the most genial companionship, and Georgy's spirits had been sinking lower and lower all day as her fears increased.

She would fain have called in a strange doctor; she would fain have sought for comfort and consolation from some new quarter. But she was afraid of offending Philip Sheldon; and she was afraid of alarming her husband. So she waited, and watched, and struggled against that ever-increasing anxiety. Had not Mr. Sheldon made light of his friend's malady, and what motive could he have for deceiving

?

A breakfast-cup full of beef-tea stood on the little table by the side, and had been standing there for hours untouched.

"I did take such pains to make it strong and clear," said Mrs. Woolper, regretfully, as she came to the little table during a tidying

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process, "and poor dear Mr. Halliday hasn't taken so much as a spoonful. It won't be fit for him to-morrow, so as I haven't eaten a morsel of dinner, what with the hurry and anxiety and one thing and another, I'll warm up the beef-tea for my supper. There's not a blessed thing in the house; for you don't eat nothing, Mrs. Halliday; and as to cooking a dinner for Mr. Sheldon, you'd a deal better go and throw your victuals out into the gutter, for then there'd be a chance of stray dogs profiting by 'em, at any rate."

"Phil is off his feed, then; eh, Nancy?" said George.

"I should rather think he is, Mr. George. I roasted a chicken yesterday for him and Mrs. Halliday, and I don't think they eat an ounce between them; and such a lovely tender young thing as it was too—done to a turn—with bread-sauce and a little bit of sea-kale. One invalid makes another, that's certain. I never saw your brother so upset as he is now, Mr. George, in all his life."

"No?" answered George Sheldon thoughtfully; "Phil isn't generally one of your sensitive sort."

The invalid was sleeping heavily during this conversation. George stood by the bed for some minutes looking down at the altered face, and then turned to leave the room.

"Good-night, Mrs. Halliday," he said; "I hope I shall find poor old Tom a shade better when I look round to-morrow."

"I am sure I hope so," Georgy answered mournfully.

She was sitting by the window looking out at the darkening western sky, in which the last lurid glimmer of a stormy sunset was fading against a background of iron gray.

This quiet figure by the window, the stormy sky, and ragged hurrying clouds without, the dusky chamber with all its dismally significant litter of medicine-bottles, made a gloomy picture; a picture which the man who looked upon it carried in his mind for many years after that night.

George Sheldon and Nancy Woolper left the room together, the Yorkshirewoman carrying a tray of empty phials and glasses, and amongst them the cup of beef-tea.

"He seems in a bad way to-night, Nancy," said George, with a backward jerk of his head towards the sick chamber.

"He *is* in a bad way, Mr. George," answered the woman gravely, "let Mr. Philip think what he will. I don't want to say a word against your brother's knowledge, for such a steady studious gentleman as he is had need be clever; and if I was ill myself, I'd trust my life to him freely; for I've heard Barlingford folks say that my master's advice is as good as any regular doctor's, and that there's very little your regular doctors know that he doesn't know as well or better. But for all that, Mr. George, I don't think he understands Mr. Halliday's case quite as clear as he might."

"Do you think Tom's in any danger?"

"I won't say that, Mr. George; but I think he gets worse instead of getting better."

"Humph!" muttered George, "if Halliday were to go off the hooks, Phil would have a good chance of getting a rich wife."

"Don't say that, Mr. George," exclaimed the Yorkshirewoman reproachfully; "don't even think of such a thing while that poor man lies at death's door. I'm sure Mr. Sheldon hasn't any thoughts of that kind. He told me before Mr. and Mrs. Halliday came to town, that he and Miss Georgy had forgotten all about past times."

"O, if Phil said so, that alters the case. Phil is one of your blunt outspoken fellows; and always says what he means," said George Sheldon. And then he went downstairs, leaving Nancy to follow him at her leisure with the tray of jingling cups and glasses. He went down through the dusk, smiling to himself, as if he had just given utterance to some piece of intense humour. He went to look for his brother, whom he found in the torture-chamber, busied with some mysterious process in connection with a lump of plaster-of-paris, which seemed to be the model of ruined battlements in the Gothic style. The dentist looked up as George entered the room, and did not appear particularly delighted by the appearance of that gentleman.

"Well," said Mr. Sheldon the younger, "busy as usual? Patients seem to be looking up."

"Patients be — toothless to the end of time!" cried Philip, with a savage laugh. "No, I'm not working to order; I'm only experimentalising."

"You're rather fond of experiments, I think, Phil," said George, seating himself near the table at which his brother was working under the glare of the gas. The dentist looked very pale and haggard in the gas-light, and his eyes had the dull sunken appearance induced by prolonged sleeplessness. George sat watching his brother thoughtfully for some time, and then produced his cigar-case. "You don't mind my smoke here?" he asked, as he lighted a cigar.

"Not at all. You are very welcome to sit here, if it amuses you to see me working at the cast of a lower jaw."

"O, that's a lower jaw, is it? It looks like the fragment of some castle-keep. No, Phil, I don't care about watching you work. I want to talk to you seriously."

"What about?"

"About that fellow upstairs; poor old Tom. He and I were great cronies, you know, at home. He's in a very bad way, Phil."

"Is he? You seem to be turning physician all at once, George. I shouldn't have thought your grubbing among county histories, and tattered old pedigrees, and parish registers had given you so deep an insight into the science of medicine!" said the dentist, in a sneering tone.

"I don't know any thing of medicine; but I know enough to be sure that Tom Halliday is about as bad as he can be. What mystifies

me is, that he doesn't seem to have had any thing particular the matter with him. There he lies, getting worse and worse every day, without any specific ailment. It's a strange illness, Philip."

"I don't see any thing strange in it."

"Don't you? Don't you think the surrounding circumstances are strange? Here is this man comes to your house hale and hearty; and all of a sudden he falls ill, and gets lower and lower every day, without any body being able to say why or wherefore."

"That's not true, George. Every body in this house knows the cause of Tom Halliday's illness. He came home in wet clothes, and insisted on keeping them on. He caught a cold; which resulted in low fever. There is the whole history and mystery of the affair."

"That's simple enough, certainly. But if I were you, Phil, I'd call in another doctor."

"That is Mrs. Halliday's business," answered the dentist, coolly; "she knows that if she doubts my skill, she is free to call in whom she pleases. And now you may as well drop the subject, George. I've had enough anxiety about this man's illness, and I don't want to be worried by you."

After this there was a little conversation about general matters, but the talk dragged and languished drearily, and George Sheldon rose to depart directly he had finished his cigar.

"Good night, Philip!" he said; "if ever you get a stroke of good luck, I hope you'll stand something handsome to me."

This remark had no particular relevance to any thing that had been said that night by the two men. Yet Philip Sheldon seemed in no wise astonished by it.


"If things ever *do* take a turn for the better with me, you'll find me a good friend, George," he said, gravely; and then Mr. Sheldon the younger bade him good-night, and went out into Fitzgeorge-street.

He paused for a moment at the corner of the street to look back at his brother's house. He could see the lighted windows of the invalid's chamber, and it was at those he looked.

"Poor Tom," he said to himself, "poor Tom! we were great cronies in the old times, and have had many a pleasant evening together!"

Mr. Sheldon the dentist sat up till the small hours that night, as he had done for many nights lately. He finished his work in the torture-chamber, and went up to the common sitting-room, or drawing-room as it was called by courtesy, a little before midnight. The servants had gone to bed, for there was no regular nightly watch in the apartment of the invalid. Mrs. Halliday lay on a sofa in her husband's room, and Nancy Woolper slept in an adjoining apartment, *always* wakeful and ready if help of any kind should be wanted.

The house was very quiet just now. Philip Sheldon walked up and



down the room, thinking; and the creaking of his boots sounded unpleasantly loud to his ears. He stopped before the fire-place, after having walked to and fro some time, and began to examine some letters that lay upon the mantelpiece. They were addressed to Mr. Halliday, and had been forwarded from Yorkshire. The dentist took them up one by one, and deliberately examined them. They were all business letters, and most of them bore country post-marks. But there was one which had been, in the first instance, posted from London; and this letter Mr. Sheldon examined with especial attention.

It was a big official-looking document, and embossed upon the adhesive envelope appeared the crest and motto of the Alliance Insurance Office.

"I wonder whether that's all square," thought Mr. Sheldon, as he turned the envelope about in his hands, staring at it absently. "I ought to make sure of that. The London post-mark is nearly three weeks old." He pondered for some moments, and then went to the cupboard in which he kept the materials wherewith to replenish or to make a fire. Here he found a little tin tea-kettle, in which he was in the habit of boiling water for occasional friendly glasses of grog. He poured some water from a bottle on the sideboard into this kettle, set fire to a bundle of wood, and put the kettle on the blazing sticks. After having done this he searched for a tea-cup, succeeded in finding one, and then stood watching for the boiling of the water. He had not long to wait; the water boiled furiously before the wood was burnt out, and Mr. Sheldon filled the tea-cup standing on the table. Then he put the insurance-office letter over the cup, with the seal downwards, and left it so while he resumed his walk. After walking up and down for about ten minutes he went back to the table and took up the letter. The adhesive envelope opened easily, and Mr. Sheldon, by this ingenious stratagem, made himself master of his friend's business.

The "Alliance" letter was nothing more than a notice to the effect that the half-yearly premium for insuring the sum of three thousand pounds on the life of Thomas Halliday would be due on such a day, after which there would be twenty-one days' grace, at the end of which time the policy would become void, unless the premium had been duly paid.

Mr. Halliday's letters had been suffered to accumulate during the last fortnight. The letters forwarded from Yorkshire had been detained some time, as they had been sent first to Hyley Farm, now in possession of the new owner, and then to Barlingford, to the house of Georgy's mother, who had kept them upwards of a week, in daily expectation of her son-in-law's return. It was only on the receipt of a letter from Georgy, containing the tidings of her husband's illness, that Mr. Halliday's letters had been sent to London.

Thus it came about that the twenty-one days of grace were within

four-and-twenty hours of expiry when Philip Sheldon opened his friend's letter.

"This is serious," muttered the dentist, as he stood deliberating with the open letter in his hand; "there are three thousand pounds depending on that man's power to write a cheque!"

After a few minutes' reflection, he folded the letter and resealed it very carefully.

"It wouldn't do to press the matter upon him to-night," he thought; "I must wait till to-morrow morning, come what may."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. BURKHAM'S UNCERTAINTIES.

THE next morning dawned gray and pale and chill, after the manner of early spring mornings, let them ripen into never such balmy days; and with the dawn Nancy Woolper came into the invalid's chamber, more wan and sickly of aspect than the morning itself.

Mrs. Halliday started from an uneasy slumber.

"What's the matter, Nancy?" she asked, with considerable alarm. She had known the woman ever since her childhood, and she was startled this morning by some indefinable change in her manner and appearance. The hearty old woman, whose face had been like a hard rosy apple shrivelled and wrinkled by long keeping, had now a white and ghastly look which struck terror to Georgy's breast. She who was usually so brisk of manner and sharp of speech, had this morning a strange subdued tone and an unnatural calmness of demeanour. "What is the matter, Nancy?" Mrs. Halliday repeated, getting up from her sofa.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Georgy," answered the old woman, who was apt to forget that Tom Halliday's wife had ever ceased to be Georgy Cradock; "don't be frightened, my dear. I haven't been very well all night,—and—and—I've been worrying myself about Mr. Halliday. If I were you, I'd call in another doctor. Never mind what Mr. Philip says. He may be mistaken, you know, clever as he is. There's no telling. Take my advice, Miss Georgy, and call in another doctor—directly—directly," repeated the old woman, seizing Mrs. Halliday's wrist with a passionate energy, as if to give emphasis to her words.

Poor timid Georgy shrank from her with terror.

"You frighten me, Nancy," she whispered; "do you think that Tom is so much worse? You have not been with him all night; and he has been sleeping very quietly. What makes you so anxious this morning?"

"Never mind that, Miss Georgy. You get another doctor, that's all; get another doctor at once. Mr. Sheldon is a light sleeper. I'll

go to his room and tell him you've set your heart upon having fresh advice; if you'll only bear me out afterwards."

"Yes, yes; go, by all means," exclaimed Mrs. Halliday, only too ready to take alarm under the influence of a stronger mind, and eager to act when supported by another person.

Nancy Woolper went to her master's room. He must have been sleeping very lightly, if he was sleeping at all; for he was broad awake the next minute after his housekeeper's light knock had sounded on the door. In less than five minutes he came out of his room half-dressed. Nancy told him that Mrs. Halliday had taken fresh alarm about her husband, and wished for further advice.

"She sent you to tell me that?" asked Philip.

"Yes."

"And when does she want this new doctor called in?"

"Immediately, if possible."

It was seven o'clock by this time, and the morning was brightening a little.

"Very well," said Mr. Sheldon; "her wishes shall be attended to directly. Heaven forbid that I should stand between my old friend and any chance of his speedy recovery! If a stranger can bring him round quicker than I can, let the stranger come."

Mr. Sheldon was not slow to obey Mrs. Halliday's behest. He was departing on his quest breakfastless, when Nancy Woolper met him in the hall with a cup of tea. He accepted the cup almost mechanically from her hand, and took it into the parlour, whither Nancy followed him. And then for the first time he perceived that change in his housekeeper's face which had so startled Georgina Halliday.

The change was somewhat modified now; but still the Nancy Woolper of to-day was not the Nancy Woolper of yesterday.

"You're looking very queer, Nancy," said the dentist, gravely scrutinising the woman's face with his bright penetrating eyes. "Are you ill?"

"Well, Mr. Philip, I have been rather queer all night,—sickish and faintish-like."

"Ah, you've been over-fatiguing yourself in the sick-room, I dare say. Take care you don't knock yourself up."

"No; it's not that, Mr. Philip. There's not many can stand hard work better than I can. It's not *that* as made me ill. I took something last night that disagreed with me."

"More fool you," said Mr. Sheldon curtly; "you ought to know better than to ill-use your digestive powers at your age. What was it? Hard cold meat and preternaturally green pickles, I suppose; or something of that kind."

"No, sir; it was only a drop of beef-tea that I made for poor Mr.

Halliday. And that oughtn't to have disagreed with a baby, you know, sir."

"Oughtn't it?" cried the dentist disdainfully. "That's a little bit of vulgar ignorance, Mrs. Woolper. I suppose it was stuff that had been taken up to Mr. Halliday."

"Yes, Mr. Philip; you took it up with your own hands."

"Ah, to be sure; so I did. Very well, then, Mrs. Woolper, if you knew as much about atmospheric influences as I do, you'd know that food which has been standing for hours in the pestilential air of a fever-patient's room isn't fit for any body to eat. The stuff made you sick, I suppose."

"Yes, sir; sick to my very heart," answered the Yorkshire woman, with a strange mournfulness in her voice.

"Let that be a warning to you, then. Don't take any thing more that comes down from the sick-room."

"I don't think there'll be any chance of my doing that long, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't fancy Mr. Halliday is long for this world."

"Ah, you women are always ravens."

"Unless the strange doctor can do something to cure him. O, pray bring a clever man who will be able to cure that poor helpless creature upstairs. Think, Mr. Philip, how you and him used to be friends and playfellows,—brothers almost,—when you was both bits of boys. Think how bad it might seem to evil-minded folks if he died under your roof."

The dentist had been standing near the door drinking his tea during this conversation; and now for the first time he looked at his housekeeper with an expression of unmitigated astonishment.

"What, in the name of all that's ridiculous, do you mean, Nancy?" he asked impatiently. "What has my roof to do with Tom Halliday's illness—or his death, if it came to that? And what on earth can people have to say about it if he should die here instead of any where else?"

"Why, you see, sir, you being his friend, and Miss Georgy's sweet-heart that was, and him having no other doctor, folks might take it into their heads he wasn't attended properly."

"Because I'm his friend? That's very good logic! I'll tell you what it is, Mrs. Woolper; if any woman upon earth, except the woman who nursed me when I was a baby, had presumed to talk to me as you have been talking to me just this minute, I should open the door yonder and tell her to walk out of my house. Let that serve as a hint for you, Nancy; and don't you go out of your way a second time to advise me how I should treat my friend and my patient."

He handed her the empty cup, and walked out of the house. There had been no passion in his tone. His accent had been only that of a man who has occasion to reprove an old and trusted servant for an unwarrantable impertinence. Nancy Woolper stood at the

street-door watching him as he walked away, and then went slowly back to her duties in the lower regions of the house.

"It can't be true," she muttered to herself; "it can't be true."

The dentist returned to Fitzgeorge-street in less than an hour, bringing with him a surgeon from the neighbourhood, who saw the patient, discussed the treatment, spoke hopefully to Mrs. Halliday, and departed, after promising to send a saline draught. Poor Georgy's spirits, which had revived a little under the influence of the stranger's hopeful words, sank again when she discovered that the utmost the new doctor could do was to order a saline draught. Her husband had taken so many saline draughts, and had been getting daily worse under their influence.

She watched the stranger wistfully as he lingered on the threshold to say a few words to Mr. Sheldon. He was a very young man, with a frank boyish face and a rosy colour in his cheeks. He looked like some fresh young neophyte in the awful mysteries of medical science, and by no means the sort of man to whom one would have imagined Philip Sheldon appealing for help, when he found his own skill at fault. But then it must be remembered that Mr. Sheldon had only summoned the stranger in compliance with what he considered a womanish whim.

"He looks very young," Georgina said regretfully, after the doctor's departure.

"So much the better, my dear Mrs. Halliday," answered the dentist cheerfully; "medical science is eminently progressive, and the youngest men are the best-educated men."

Poor Georgy did not understand this; but it sounded convincing; and she was in the habit of believing what people told her; so she accepted Mr. Sheldon's opinion. How could she doubt that he was wiser than herself in all matters connected with the medical profession?

"Tom seems a little better this morning," she said presently.

The invalid was asleep, shrouded by the curtain of the heavy old-fashioned four-post bedstead.

"He is better," answered the dentist; "so much better, that I shall venture to give him a few business letters that have been waiting for him some time, as soon as he wakes."

He seated himself by the head of the bed, and waited quietly for the awakening of the patient.

"Your breakfast is ready for you downstairs, Mrs. Halliday," he said presently; "hadn't you better go down and take it, while I keep watch here? It's nearly ten o'clock."

"I don't care about any breakfast," Georgina answered piteously.

"Ah, but you'd better eat something. You'll make yourself an invalid, if you are not careful; and then you won't be able to attend upon Tom."

This argument prevailed immediately. Georgy went down stairs to the drawing-room, and tried bravely to eat and drink, in order that she might be sustained in her attendance upon her husband. She had forgotten all the throes and tortures of jealousy which she had endured on his account. She had forgotten his late hours and unholy roysterings. She had forgotten every thing except that he had been very tender and kind throughout the prosperous years of their married life, and that he was lying in the darkened room upstairs sick to death.

Mr. Sheldon waited with all outward show of patience for the awakening of the invalid. But he looked at his watch twice during that half-hour of waiting; and once he rose and moved softly about the room, searching for writing materials. He found a little portfolio of Georgina's, and a frivolous-minded inkstand, after the semblance of an apple, with a gilt stalk and leaflet. The dentist took the trouble to ascertain that there was a decent supply of ink in the green glass apple, and that the pens were in working order. Then he went quietly back to his seat by the bedside and waited.

The invalid opened his eyes presently, and recognised his friend with a feeble smile.

"Well, Tom, old fellow, how do you feel to-day?—a little better, I hear from Mrs. H.," said the dentist cheerily.

"Yes, I think I *am* a shade better. But, you see, the deuce of it is I never get more than a shade better. It always stops at that. The little woman can't complain of me now, can she, Sheldon? No more late hours, or oyster-suppers, eh?"

"No, no, not just yet. You'll have to take care of yourself for a week or two when you get about again."

Mr. Halliday smiled faintly as his friend said this.

"I shall be very careful of myself if I ever do get about again, you may depend upon it, old fellow. But do you know I sometimes fancy I have spent my last jolly evening, and eaten my last oyster-supper, on this earth? I'm afraid it's time for me to begin to think seriously of a good many things. The little woman is all right, thank God. I made my will upwards of a year ago, and insured my life pretty heavily soon after my marriage. Old Cradock never let me rest till that was done. So Georgy will be all safe. But when a man has led a careless, godless kind of a life,—doing very little harm perhaps, but doing no particular good,—he ought to set about making up his account somehow for a better world, when he feels himself slipping out of this. I asked Georgy for her Bible yesterday, and the poor dear loving little thing was frightened out of her wits. 'O, don't talk like that, Tom,' she cried; 'Mr. Sheldon says you are getting better every hour,'—by which you may guess what a rare thing it is for me to read my Bible. No, Phil, old fellow, you've done your best for me, I know; but I'm not made of a very tough material, and all the physic you can pour

down this poor sore throat of mine won't put any strength into me."

"Nonsense, dear boy; that's just what a man who has not been accustomed to illness is sure to think directly he is laid up for a day or two."

"I've been laid up for three weeks," murmured Mr. Halliday rather fretfully.

"Well, well, perhaps this Mr. Burkham will bring you round in three days, and then you'll say that your friend Sheldon was an ignoramus."

"No, no, I sha'n't, old fellow; I'm not such a fool as that. I'm not going to blame you when it's my own constitution that's in fault. As to that young man you brought here just now, to please Georgy, I don't suppose he'll be able to do any more for me than you have done."

"We'll contrive to bring you round between us, never fear, Tom," answered Philip Sheldon in his most hopeful tone. "Why, you are looking almost your old self this morning. You are so much improved that I may venture to talk to you about business. There have been some letters lying about for the last few days. I didn't like to bore you while you were so very low. But they look like business letters; and perhaps it would be as well for you to open them."

The sick man contemplated the little packet which the dentist had taken from his breast-pocket; and then shook his head wearily.

"I'm not up to the mark, Sheldon," he said; "the letters must keep."

"O, come, come, old fellow! That's giving way, you know. The letters may be important; and it will do you good if you make an effort to rouse yourself."

"I tell you it isn't in me to do it, Philip Sheldon. I'm past making efforts. Can't you see that, man? Open the letters yourself, if you like."

"No, no, Halliday, I won't do that. Here's one with the seal of the Alliance Insurance Office. I suppose your premium is all right."

Tom Halliday lifted himself on his elbow for a moment, startled into new life; but he sank back upon the pillows again immediately, with a feeble groan.

"I don't know about that," he said anxiously; "you'd better look to that, Phil, for the little woman's sake. A man is apt to think that his insurance is settled and done with when he has been pommelled about by the doctors and approved by the board. He forgets there's that little matter of the premium. You'd better open the letter, Phil. I never was a good hand at remembering dates, and this illness has thrown me altogether out of gear."

Mr. Sheldon tore open that official document which, in his benevolent regard for his friend's interest, he had manipulated so cleverly on the previous evening, and read the letter with all show of deliberation.

"You're right, Tom," he exclaimed presently. "The twenty-one days' grace expire to-day. You'd better write me a cheque at once, and I'll send it on to the office by hand. Where's your cheque-book?"

"In the pocket of that coat hanging up there."

Philip Sheldon found the cheque-book, and brought it to his friend, with Georgy's portfolio, and the frivolous little green glass inkstand in the shape of an apple. He adjusted the writing materials for the sick man's use with womanly gentleness. His arm supported the wasted frame, as Tom Halliday slowly and laboriously filled in the cheque; and when the signature was duly appended to that document he drew a long breath, which seemed to express infinite relief of mind.

"You'll be sure it goes on to the Alliance Office, eh, old fellow?" asked Tom, as he tore out the oblong slip of paper and handed it to his friend. "It was kind of you to jog my memory about this business. I'm such a fellow for procrastinating matters. And I'm afraid I've been a little off my head during the last week."

"Nonsense, Tom; not you."

"O, yes, I have. I've had all sorts of queer fancies. Did you come into this room the night before last, when Georgy was asleep?"

Mr. Sheldon reflected for a moment before answering.

"No," he said, "not the night before last."

"Ah, I thought as much," murmured the invalid. "I was off my head that night then, Phil, for I fancied I saw you; and I fancied I heard the bottles and glasses jingling on the little table behind the curtain."

"You were dreaming, perhaps."

"O, no, I wasn't dreaming. I was very restless and wakeful that night. However, that's neither here nor there. I lie in a stupid state sometimes for hours and hours, and I feel as weak as a rat, bodily and mentally; so while I have my wits about me I'd better say what I've been wanting to say ever so long. You've been a good and kind friend to me all through this illness, Phil, and I'm not ungrateful for your kindness. If it does come to the worst with me—as I believe it will—Georgy shall give you a handsome mourning ring, or fifty pounds to buy one, if you like it better. And now let me shake hands with you, Philip Sheldon, and say thank you heartily, old fellow, for once and for ever."

The invalid stretched out a poor feeble attenuated hand, and, after a moment's pause, Philip Sheldon clasped it in his own muscular fingers. He did hesitate for just one instant before taking that hand.

He was no student of the Gospel; but when he had left the sick chamber there arose before him suddenly, as if written in letters of fire on the wall opposite to him, one sentence which had been familiar to him in his school-days at Barlingford:

*And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith—
Master, master; and kissed him.*

The new doctor came twice a day to see his patient. He seemed rather anxious about the case, and just a little puzzled by the symptoms. Georgy had sufficient penetration to perceive that this new adviser was in some manner at fault; and she began to think that Philip Sheldon was right, and that regular practitioners were very stupid creatures. She communicated her doubts to Mr. Sheldon, and suggested the expediency of calling in some grave elderly doctor, to supersede Mr. Burkham. But against this the dentist protested very strongly.

"You asked me to call in a stranger, Mrs. Halliday, and I have done so," he said with the dignity of an offended man. "You must now abide by his treatment, and content yourself with his advice, unless he chooses to summon further assistance."

Georgy was fain to submit. She gave a little plaintive sigh, and went back to her husband's room, where she sat and wept silently behind the bed-curtains. There was a double watch kept in the sick chamber now; for Nancy Woolper rarely left it, and rarely closed her eyes. It was altogether a sad time in the dentist's house; and Tom Halliday apologised to his friend more than once for the trouble he had brought upon him. If he had been familiar with the details of modern history, he would have quoted Charles Stuart, and begged pardon for being so long a-dying.

But anon there came a gleam of hope. The patient seemed decidedly better; and Georgy was prepared to revere Mr. Burkham, the Bloomsbury surgeon, as the greatest and ablest of men. Those shadows of doubt and perplexity which had at first obscured Mr. Burkham's brow cleared away, and he spoke very cheerfully of the invalid.

Unhappily this state of things did not last long. The young surgeon came one morning, and was obviously alarmed by the appearance of his patient. He told Philip Sheldon as much; but that gentleman made very light of his fears. As the two men discussed the case, it was very evident that the irregular practitioner was quite a match for the regular one. Mr. Burkham listened deferentially, but departed only half convinced. He walked briskly away from the house, but came to a dead stop directly after turning out of Fitzgeorge-street.

"What ought I to do?" he asked himself. "What course ought I to take? If I am right, I should be a villain to let things go on. If I am wrong, any thing like interference would ruin me for life."

He had finished his morning round, but he did not go straight home. He lingered at the corners of quiet streets, and walked up and down the unfrequented side of a gloomy square. Once he turned and retraced his steps in the direction of Fitzgeorge-street. But after all this hesitation he walked home, and ate his dinner very thoughtfully, answering his young wife at random when she talked to him. He was a struggling man, who had invested his small fortune in the purchase

of a practice which had turned out a very poor one, and he had the battle of life before him.

"There's something on your mind to-day, I'm sure, Harry," his wife said before the meal was ended.

"Well, yes, dear," he answered; "I've rather a difficult case in Fitzgeorge-street, and I'm anxious about it."

The industrious little wife disappeared after dinner, and the young surgeon walked up and down the room alone, brooding over that difficult case in Fitzgeorge-street. After spending nearly an hour thus, he snatched his hat suddenly from the table on which he had set it down, and hurried from the house.

"I'll have advice and assistance, come what may," he said to himself, as he walked rapidly in the direction of Mr. Sheldon's house. "The case may be straight enough—I certainly can't see that the man has any motive—but I'll have advice."

He looked up at the dentist's spotless dwelling as he crossed the street. The blinds were all down, and the fact that they were so sent a sudden chill to his heart. But the April sunshine was full upon that side of the street, and there might be no significance in those closely-drawn blinds. The door was opened by a sleepy-looking boy, and in the passage Mr. Burkham met Philip Sheldon.

"I have been rather anxious about my patient since this morning, Mr. Sheldon," said the surgeon; "and I've come to the conclusion that I ought to confer with a man of higher standing than myself. Do you think Mrs. Halliday will object to such a course?"

"I am sure she would not have objected to it," the dentist answered very gravely, "if you had suggested it sooner. I am sorry to say the suggestion comes too late. My poor friend breathed his last half an hour ago."

Book the Second.

THE TWO MACAIRES.

CHAPTER I.

A GOLDEN TEMPLE.

IN the very midst of the Belgian iron country, under the shadow of tall sheltering ridges of pine-clad mountain-land, nestles the fashionable little watering-place called Forêtdechêne. Two or three hand-

some hotels; a bright white new pile of building, with vast windows of shining plate-glass, and a stately quadrangular courtyard; a tiny street, which looks as if a fragment of English Brighton had been dropped into this Belgian valley; a stunted semi-classic temple, which is at once a post-office and a shrine whereat invalids perform their worship of Hygeia by the consumption of unspeakably disagreeable mineral-waters; a few tall white villas scattered here and there upon the slopes of pine-clad hills; and a very uncomfortable railway-station—constitute the chief features of Forêtdechéne. But right and left of that little cluster of shops and hotels there stretch deep sombre avenues of oak, that look like sheltered ways to Paradise—and the deep, deep blue of the August sky, and the pure breath of the warm soft air, and the tender green of the young pine-woods that clothe the sandy hills, and the delicious tranquillity that pervades the sleepy little town and bathes the hot landscape in a languorous mist, are charms that render Forêtdechéne a pleasant oasis amid the lurid woods and mountains of the iron country.

Only at stated intervals the quiet of this sleepy hollow is broken by the rolling of wheels, the jingling of bells, the cracking of whips, the ejaculations of drivers and supplications of touters: only when the railroad carries away departing visitors, or brings fresh ones, is there any thing like riot or confusion in the little town under the pine-clad hills—and even then the riot and confusion are of a very mild order, and create but a transient discord amongst the harmonies of nature.

And yet, despite the Arcadian tranquillity of the landscape, the drowsy quiet of the pine-groves, the deep and solemn shade of those dark avenues, where one might fondly hope to find some Druidess lingering beneath the shelter of the oaks, there is excitement of no common order to be found in the miniature watering-place of Forêtdechéne; and the reflective and observant traveller, on a modern sentimental journey, has only to enter the stately white building with the glittering plate-glass windows in order to behold the master-passions of the human breast unveiled for his pleasure and edification.

The ignorant traveller, impelled by curiosity, finds no bar to his entrance. The doors are as wide open as if the mansion were an hotel; and yet it is not an hotel, though a placard which he passes informs the traveller that he may have ices and *sorbets*, if he will; nor is the bright fresh-looking building a theatre, for another placard informs the visitor that there are dramatic performances to be witnessed every evening in a building on one side of the quadrangle, which is a mere subsidiary attachment to the vast white mansion. The traveller, passing on his way unhindered, save by a man in livery, who deprives him of his cane, ascends a splendid staircase and traverses a handsome antechamber, from which a pair of plate-glass doors open into a spacious *saloon*, where, in the warm August sunlight, a

circle of men and women are gathered round a great green table, gambling.

The ignorant traveller, unaccustomed to the amusements of a Continental watering-place, may perhaps feel a little sense of surprise—something almost akin to shame—as he contemplates that silent crowd whose occupation seems so much the more strange to him because of their silence. There is no lively bustle, none of that animation which generally attends every kind of amusement, none of the clamour of the betting-ring or the exchange. The gamblers at Forêtdechêne are terribly in earnest: and the ignorant visitor unconsciously adapts himself to the solemn hush of the place and steps softly as he approaches the table round which they are clustered—as many sitting as can find room round the green-cloth-covered board; while behind the sitters there are people standing two or three rows deep, the hindermost watching the table over the shoulders of their neighbours. A placard upon the wall informs visitors that only constant players are permitted to remain seated at that sacred table. Perhaps a third of the players and a third of the lookers-on are women. And if there are lips more tightly contracted than other lips, and eyes with a harder, greedier light in them than other eyes, those lips and those eyes belong to the women. The ungloved feminine hands have a claw-like aspect as they scrape the glittering pieces of silver over the green cloth; the feminine throats look weird and scraggy as they crane themselves over masculine shoulders; the feminine eyes have something demoniac in their steely glare as they keep watch upon the rapid progress of the game.

Half-a-dozen moderate fortunes seem to be lost and won while the traveller looks on from the background, unnoticed and unseen; for in those plate-glass doors swung suddenly open to admit the seven angels of the Apocalypse, carrying the seven golden vials filled with the wrath of God, it is doubtful whether the splendour of their awful glory, or the trumpet-notes that heralded their coming, would have power to arouse the players from their profound abstraction.

Half-a-dozen comfortable little patrimonies seem to have changed hands while the traveller has been looking on; and yet he has only watched the table for about ten minutes; and this splendid *salon* is but an outer chamber, where one may stake as shabby a sum as two francs, if one is shabby enough to wish to do so, and where playing for half-an-hour or so on a pleasant summer morning one could scarcely lose more than fifty or sixty pounds. Another pair of plate-glass doors open into an inner chamber, where the silence is still more profound and where around a larger table sit one row of players; while only here and there a little group of outsiders stand behind their chairs. There is more gilding on the walls and ceiling of this chamber; the frescoes are more delicate; the crystal chandeliers are adorned with richer clusters of sparkling drops, that twinkle like diamonds in the sun

This is the temple of gold; and in this splendid chamber one may hazard no smaller stake than half a napoleon. There are women here; but not so many women as in the outer saloon; and the women here are younger and prettier and more carefully dressed than those who stake only silver.

The prettiest and the youngest woman in this golden chamber on one particular August afternoon, nine years after the death of Tom Halliday, was a girl who stood behind the chair of a military-looking Englishman, an old man whose handsome face was a little disfigured by those traces which late hours and dissipated habits are supposed to leave behind them.

The girl held a card in one hand and a pin in the other, and was occupied in some mysterious process, by which she kept note of the Englishman's play. She was very young, with a delicate face, in whose softer lines there was a refined likeness to the features of the man whose play she watched. But while his eyes were hard and cold and gray, hers were of that dense black in which there seems such an unfathomable and mysterious depth. As she was the handsomest, so she was also the worst-dressed woman in the room. Her flimsy silk mantle had faded from black to rusty brown; the straw-hat which shaded her face was sunburnt; the ribbons had lost their brightness; but there was an air of attempted fashion in the puffings and trimmings of her alpaca skirt; and there was evidence of a struggle with poverty in the tight-fitting lavender gloves, whose streaky lines bore witness to the imperfection of the cleaner's art. Elegant Parisians and the select of Brussels glanced at the military Englishman and his handsome daughter with some slight touch of supercilious surprise—one has no right to find shabbily-dressed young women in the golden temple—and it is scarcely necessary to state that it was from her own countrywomen the young person in alpaca received the most chilling glances. But those Parthian arrows shot from feminine eyes had little power to wound their object just now. The girl looked up from her perforated card very seldom; and when she raised her eyes, it was always to look in one direction—towards the great glass-doors opening from the outer saloon. Loungers came and went; the doors swung open and closed again as noiselessly as it is possible for well-regulated doors to open and shut; footsteps sounded on the polished floors; and sometimes, when the young person in alpaca lifted her eyes, a passing shadow of disappointment darkened her face. A modern Laurence Sterne, on a new Sentimental Journey, might have derived some interest from the study of the girl's countenance; but the reflective and observant traveller is not to be encountered very often in this age of excursionists; and Maria and her goat may roam the highways and byways for a long time before she will find any dreamy loiterer with a mind attuned to sympathy.

The shabbily-dressed girl was looking for some one. She watched her father's play carefully—she marked her card with unflinching preci-

sion ; but she performed these duties with a mechanical air ; and only when she lifted her eyes to the great shining plate-glass which opened into this dangerous Paradise, that any ray of animation animated her countenance. She was looking for some one, a person watched for was so long coming. Ah, how difficult for an arithmetician to number the crushing disappointments, the bitter trials that one woman can endure in a single half-hour ! This girl so young—so young ; and already she had learnt to suffer.

The man played with the concentrated attention and the impassive countenance of an experienced gamester, rarely lifting his eyes from the green cloth, never looking back at the girl who stood behind him who was winning to-day, and he accepted his good fortune as quietly as if he had often accepted evil fortune at the same table. He seemed to be playing on some system of his own ; and neighbouring players looked at him with envious eyes, as they saw the pile of gold grow large on his thin nervous hands. Ignorant gamesters, who stood aloof and watching, saw him lose two or three napoleons, contemplated the lucky Englishman and wondered about him, while some touch of pity leavened their excitement by his wonderful fortune. He looked like a decayed gentleman, a man who had been a military dandy in the days that were gone, who had all the old pretensions still, without the power to support them—a Brummel languishing at Caen ; a Nash wasting his days at Bath.

At last the girl's face brightened suddenly as she glanced towards ; and it would have been very easy for the observant traveller if any such person had existed—to construe aright that brightening in her countenance. The some-one she had been watching had arrived.

The doors swung open to admit a man of about five-and-thirty, whose darkly-handsome face and careless costume had somewhat of that air which was once wont to be associated with the personification of the poetry of George Gordon Lord Byron. The new-comer was just the sort of man whom very young women are apt to admire, and whom worldly-minded people are prone to distrust. There was a perfect Bohemianism, a flavour of the Quartier Latin, about the loose cravat, the wide trousers, and black-velvet morning-coat, with which the young man outraged the opinions of respectable visitors at the dechêne. There was a semi-poetic vagabondism in the half-indifferent, half-contemptuous expression of his face, with its fierce, strongly-marked eyebrows overshadowing sleepy gray eyes—eyes which were half hidden by their long dark lashes ; as still pools of water lie sometimes hidden amongst the rushes that flourish about them.

He was handsome, and he knew that he was handsome ; he affected to despise the beauty of his proud dark face, as he affected to despise all the brightest and most beautiful things upon earth ;

there was a vagabondish kind of foppery in his costume that contrasted sharply with the gentlemanly dandyism of the shabby gamester sitting at the table. There was a distance of nearly half a century between the style of the Regency dandy and the Quartier-Latin lion.

The girl watched the new-comer with sad earnest eyes as he walked slowly towards the table, and a faint blush kindled in her cheeks as he came nearer to the spot where she stood. He went by her presently, carrying an atmosphere of stale tobacco with him as he went; and he gave her a friendly nod as he passed, and a "Good-morning, Diana;" but that was all. The faint blush faded and left her very pale: but she resumed her weary task with the card and the pin; and if she had endured any disappointment within those few moments, it seemed to be a kind of disappointment that she was accustomed to suffer.

The young man walked round the table till he came to the only vacant chair, in which he seated himself, and after watching the game for a few minutes, began to play. From the moment in which he dropped into that vacant seat to the moment in which he rose to leave the table, three hours afterwards, he never lifted his eyes from the green cloth, or seemed to be conscious of any thing that was going on around or about him. The girl watched him furtively for some little time after he had taken his place at the table; but the stony mask of the professed gambler is a profitless object for a woman's earnest scrutiny.

She sighed presently, and laid her hand heavily on the chair behind which she was standing. The action aroused the man who sat in it, and he turned and looked at her for the first time.

"You are tired, Diana?"

"Yes, papa, I am very tired."

"Give me your card, then, and go away," the gamester answered peevishly; "girls are always tired."

She gave him the mysteriously-perforated card, and left her post behind his chair; and then, after roaming about the great saloon with a weary listless air, and wandering from one open window to another to look into the sunny quadrangle, where well-dressed people were sitting at little tables eating ices or drinking lemonade, she went away altogether, and roamed into another chamber where some children were dancing to the sound of a feeble violin. She sat upon a velvet-covered bench, and watched the children's lesson for some minutes, and then rose and wandered to another open window that overlooked the same quadrangle, where the well-dressed people were enjoying themselves in the hot August sunshine.

"How extravagantly every body dresses!" she thought, "and what a shabby poverty-stricken creature one feels amongst them! And yet if I ask papa to give me a couple of napoleons out of the money he won to-day, he will only look at me from head to foot, and tell me that I have a gown and a cloak and a bonnet, and ask me what more I can want,

in the name of all that is unreasonable? And I see girls here whose fathers are so fond of them and so proud of them—ugly girls, decked out in silks and muslins and ribbons that have cost a small fortune—clumsy awkward girls, who look at *me* as if I were some new kind of wild animal.”

The saloons at Forêtdechêne were rich in monster sheets of looking-glass; and in wandering discontentedly about the room Diana Paget saw herself reflected many times in all her shabbiness. It was only very lately she had discovered that she had some pretension to good looks; for her father, who could not or would not educate her decently or clothe her creditably, took a very high tone of morality in his paternal teaching, and in the fear that she might one day grow vain of her beauty, had taken care to impress upon her at an early age that she was the very incarnation of all that is lean and sallow and awkward.

CHAPTER II.

THE EASY DESCENT.

AMONGST the many imprudences of which Horatio Paget—once a captain in a crack cavalry regiment, always a captain in his intercourse with the world—had been guilty during the course of a long career, there was none for which he so bitterly reproached himself as for a certain foolish marriage which he had made late in life. It was when he had thrown away the last chance that an indulgent destiny had given him, that the ruined fop of the Regency, the sometime member of the Beef-steak Club, the man who in his earliest youth had worn a silver gridiron at his button-hole, and played piquet in the gilded saloons of Georgina of Devonshire, found himself laid on a bed of sickness in dingy London lodgings, and nearer death than he had ever been in the course of his brief military career; so nearly gliding from life's swift-flowing river into eternity's trackless ocean, that the warmest thrill of gratitude which ever stirred the slow pulses of his cold heart quickened its beating as he clasped the hand that had held him back from the unknown region whose icy breath had chilled him with an awful fear. Such men as Horatio Paget are apt to feel a strange terror when the black night drops suddenly down upon them, and the "Gray Boatman's" voice sounds hollow and mysterious in the darkness, announcing that the ocean is near. The hand that held the ruined spendthrift back when the current swept so swiftly ocean-ward was a woman's tender hand; and heaven only knows what patient watchfulness, what careful administration of medicines and unwearying preparation of broths and jellies and sagos and gruels, what untiring and devoted slavery, had been necessary to save the faded rake; who looked out upon the world once more, a ghastly shadow of his former self, a penniless helpless burden for any one who might choose to support *him*.

"Don't thank *me*," said the doctor, when his feeble patient whimpered flourishing protestations of his gratitude, unabashed by the consciousness that such grateful protestations were the sole coin with which the medical man would be paid for his services; "thank that young woman, if you want to thank any body; for if it had not been for her you wouldn't be here to talk about gratitude. And if ever you get such another attack of inflammation on the lungs, you had better pray for such another nurse, though I don't think you're likely to find one."

And with this exordium, the rough-and-ready surgeon took his departure, leaving Horatio Paget alone with the woman who had saved his life.

She was only his landlady's daughter; and his landlady was no prosperous householder in Mayfair, thriving on the extravagance of wealthy bachelors, but an honest widow, living in an obscure little street leading out of the Old Kent Road, and letting a meagrely-furnished little parlour and a still more meagrely-furnished little bedroom to any single gentleman whom reverse of fortune might lead into such a locality. Captain Paget had sunk very low in the world when he took possession of that wretched parlour and laid himself down to rest on the widow's flock-bed.

There is apt to be a dreary interval in the life of such a man—a blank dismal interregnum, which divides the day in which he spends his last shilling from the hour in which he begins to prey deliberately upon the purses of other people. It was in that hopeless interval that Horatio Paget established himself in the widow's parlour. But though he slept in the Old Kent Road, he had not yet brought himself to endure existence on the Surrey side of the water. He emerged from his lodging every morning to hasten westward, resplendent in clean linen and exquisitely-fitting gloves, an unquestionable overcoat, and varnished boots.

The wardrobe has its Indian summer; and the glory of a first-rate tailor's coat is like the splendour of a tropical sun—it is glorious to the last, and sinks in a moment. Captain Paget's wardrobe was in its Indian summer in these days; and when he felt how fatally near the Bond-Street pavement was to the soles of his feet, he could not refrain from a fond admiration of the boots that were so beautiful in decay.

He walked the West-end for many weary hours every day during this period of his decadence. He tried to live in an honest gentlemanly way, by borrowing money of his friends, or discounting an accommodation-bill obtained from some innocent acquaintance who was deluded by his brilliant appearance and specious tongue into a belief in the transient nature of his difficulties. He spent his days in hanging about the halls and waiting-rooms of clubs—of some of which he had once been a member; he walked weary miles between St. James's and Mayfair, Kensington Gore and Notting Hill, leaving little notes for men who were

not at home, or writing a little note in one room while the man to whom he was writing hushed his breath in an adjoining chamber. People who had once been Captain Paget's fast friends seemed to have simultaneously decided upon spending their existence out of doors, as it appeared to the impecunious Captain. The servants of his friends were afflicted with a strange uncertainty as to their masters' movements. At whatever hall-door Horatio Paget presented himself, it seemed equally doubtful whether the proprietor of the mansion would be home to dinner that day, or whether he would be at home any time next day, or the day after that, or at the end of the week, or indeed whether he would ever come home again. Sometimes the Captain, calling in the evening dusk, in the faint hope of gaining admittance to some friendly dwelling, saw the glimmer of light under a dining-room door, and heard the clopping of corks and the pleasant jingling of glass and silver in the innermost recesses of a butler's pantry; but still the answer was—not at home, and not likely to be home. All the respectable world was to be out henceforth for Horatio Paget. But now and then at the clubs he met some young man, who had no wife at home to keep watch upon his purse and to wail piteously over a five-pound note ill bestowed, and who took compassion on the fallen spendthrift, and believed, or pretended to believe, his story of temporary embarrassment; and then the Captain dined sumptuously at a little French restaurant in Castle Street, Leicester Square, and took a half-bottle of chablis with his oysters, and warmed himself with chambertin that was brought to him in a dusty cobweb-shrouded bottle reposing in a wicker-basket.

But in these latter days such glimpses of sunshine very rarely illumined the dull stream of the Captain's life. Failure and disappointment had become the rule of his existence—success the rare exception. Crossing the river now on his way westward, he was wont to loiter a little on Waterloo Bridge, and to look dreamily down at the water, wondering whether the time was near at hand when, under cover of the evening dusk, he would pay his last halfpenny to the tollkeeper, and never again know the need of any earthly coin.

“I saw a fellow in the Morgue one day,—a poor wretch who had drowned himself a week or two before. Great God, how horrible he looked! If there was any certainty they would find one immediately, and bury one decently, there'd be no particular horror in that kind of death. But to be found *like that*, and to lie in some riverside dead-house down by Wapping, with a ghastly placard rotting on the rotting door, and nothing but ooze and slime and rottenness round about one—waiting to be identified! And who knows, after all, whether a dead man doesn't *feel* that sort of thing?”

It was after such musings as these had begun to be very common with Horatio Paget that he caught the chill which resulted in a very dangerous illness of many weeks. The late autumn was wet and cold and dreary; but Captain Paget, although remarkably clever after a

certain fashion, had never been a lover of intellectual pursuits, and imprisonment in Mrs. Kepp's shabby parlour was odious to him. When he had read every page of the borrowed newspaper, and pished and pshawed over the leaders, and groaned aloud at the announcement of some wealthy marriage made by one of his quondam friends, or chuckled at the record of another quondam friend's insolvency—when he had poked the fire savagely half a dozen times in an hour, cursing the pinched grate and the bad coals during every repetition of the operation—when he had smoked his last cigar, and varnished his favourite boots, and looked out of the window, and contemplated himself gloomily in the wretched little glass over the narrow chimneypiece,—Captain Paget's intellectual resources were exhausted, and an angry impatience took possession of him. Then, in defiance of the pelting rain or the lowering sky, he flung his slippers into the furthest corner—and the furthest corner of Mrs. Kepp's parlour was not very remote from the Captain's arm-chair—he drew on the stoutest of his varnished boots—and there were none of them very stout now—buttoned his perfect overcoat, adjusted his hat before the looking-glass, and sallied forth, umbrella in hand, to make his way westward. Westward always, through storm and shower, back to the haunts of his youth, went the wanderer and outcast, to see the red glow of cheery fires reflected on the plate-glass windows of his favourite clubs; to see the lamps in spacious reading-rooms lit early in the autumn dusk, and to watch the soft light glimmering on the rich bindings of the books, and losing itself in the sombre depths of crimson draperies. To this poor worldly creature the agony of banishment from those palaces of Pall Mall or St. James's Street was as bitter as the pain of a fallen angel. It was the dullest, dearest time of the year, and there were not many loungers in those sumptuous reading-rooms, where the shaded lamps shed their subdued light on the chaste splendour of the sanctuary; so Captain Paget could haunt the scene of his departed youth without much fear of recognition: but his wanderings in the West grew more hopeless and purposeless every day. He began to understand how it was that people were never at home when he assailed their doors with his fashionable knock. He could no longer endure the humiliation of such repulses, for he began to understand that the servants knew his errand as well as their masters, and had their answers ready, let him present himself before them when he would: so he besieged the doors of St. James's and Mayfair, Kensington Gore and Notting Hill no longer. He knew that the bubble of his poor foolish life had burst, and that there was nothing left for him but to die.

It seemed about this time as if the end of all was very near. Captain Paget caught a chill one miserable evening on which he returned to his lodging with his garments dripping, and his beautiful varnished boots reduced to a kind of pulp; and the chill resulted in a violent inflammation of the lungs. Then it was that a woman's hand was held

out to save him, and a woman's divine tenderness cared for him in his dire extremity.

The ministering angel who comforted this helpless and broken-down wayfarer was only a low-born ignorant girl called Mary Anne Kepp—a girl who had waited upon the Captain during his residence in her mother's house, but of whom he had taken about as much notice as he had been wont to take of the coloured servants who tended him when he was with his regiment in India. Horatio Paget had been a night-brawler and a gamester, a duellist and a reprobate, in the glorious days that were gone; but he had never been a profligate: and he did not know that the girl who brought him his breakfast and staggered under the weight of his coal-scuttle was one of the most beautiful women he had ever looked upon.

The Captain was so essentially a creature of the West-end, that Beauty without her glitter of diamonds and splendour of apparel was scarcely Beauty for him. He waited for the groom of the chambers to announce her name, and the low hum of well-bred approval to accompany her entrance, before he bowed the knee and acknowledged her perfection. The Beauties whom he remembered had received their patent from the Prince Regent, and had graduated in the houses of Devonshire and Hertford. How should the faded bachelor know that this girl, in a shabby cotton-gown, with unkempt hair dragged off her pale face, and with grimy smears from the handles of saucepans and fire-irons imprinted upon her cheeks—how should he know that she was beautiful? It was only during the slow monotonous hours of his convalescence, when he lay upon the poor faded little sofa in Mrs. Kepp's parlour—the sofa that was scarcely less faded and feeble than himself—it was then, and then only, that he discovered the loveliness of the face which had been so often bent over him during his delirious wanderings.

"I have mistaken you for all manner of people, my dear," he said to his landlady's daughter, who sat by the little Pembroke-table working, while her mother dozed in a corner with a worsted stocking drawn over her arm and a pair of spectacles resting upon her elderly nose. Mrs. Kepp and her daughter were wont to spend their evenings in the lodger's apartment now; for the invalid complained bitterly of "the horrors" when they left him.

"I have taken you for all sorts of people, Mary Anne," pursued the Captain dreamily. "Sometimes I have fancied you were the Countess of Jersey, and I could see her smile as she looked at me when I was first presented to her. I was very young in the beautiful Jersey's time; and then there was the other one—whom I used to drink tea with at Brighton. Ah me! what a dull world it seems nowadays! The king gone, and every thing changed—every thing—every thing! I am a *very old man*, Mary Anne."

He was fifty-two years of age; he felt quite an old man. He had

spent all his money, he had outlived the best friends of his youth ; for it had been his fate to adorn a declining era, and he had been a youngster among elderly patrons and associates. His patrons were dead and gone, and the men he had patronised shut their doors upon him in the day of his poverty. As for his relations, he had turned his back upon them long ago, when first he followed in the shining wake of that gorgeous vessel, the *Royal George*. In this hour of his penniless decline there was none to help him. To have outlived every affection and every pleasure is the chief bitterness of old age ; and this bitterness Horatio Paget suffered in all its fulness, though his years were but fifty-two.

"I am a very old man, Mary Anne," he repeated plaintively. But Mary Anne Kepp could not think him old. To her eyes he must for ever appear the incarnation of all that is elegant and distinguished. He was the first gentleman she had ever seen. Mrs. Kepp had given shelter to other lodgers who had called themselves gentlemen, and who had been pompous and grandiose of manner in their intercourse with the widow and her daughter ; but O, what pitiful lacquered counterfeits, what Brummagem paste they had been, compared to the real gem ! Mary Anne Kepp had seen varnished boots before the humble flooring of her mother's dwelling was honoured by the tread of Horatio Paget ; but what clumsy vulgar boots, and what awkward plebeian feet had worn them ! The lodger's slim white hands and arched instep, the patrician curve of his aquiline nose, the perfect grace of his apparel, the high-bred modulation of his courteous accents,—all these had impressed Mary Anne's tender little heart so much the more because of his poverty and loneliness. That such a man should be forgotten and deserted—that such a man should be poor and lonely, seemed so cruel a chance to the simple maiden : and then when illness overtook him, and invested him with a supreme claim upon her tenderness and pity, —then the innocent girl lavished all the treasures of a compassionate heart upon the ruined gentleman. She had no thought of fee or reward ; she knew that her mother's lodger was miserably poor, and that his payments had become more and more irregular week by week and month by month. She had no consciousness of the depth of feeling that rendered her so gentle a nurse ; for her life was a busy one, and she had neither time nor inclination for any morbid brooding upon her own feelings.

She protested warmly against the Captain's lamentation respecting his age.

"The idear of any gentleman calling hisself old at fifty !" she said—and Horatio shuddered at the supererogatory "r" and the "hisself," though they proceeded from the lips of his consoler ;—"you've got many, many years before you yet, sir, please God," she added piously ; "and there's good friends will come forward yet to help you, I make no doubt."

Captain Paget shook his head peevishly.

"You talk as if you were telling my fortune with a pack of cards," he said. "No, my girl, I shall have only one friend to rely upon, if ever I am well enough to go outside this house; and that friend is myself. I have spent the fortune my father left me; I have spent the price of my commission; and I have parted with every object of any value that I ever possessed—in vulgar parlance, I am cleaned out, Mary Anne. But other men have spent every sixpence belonging to them, and have contrived to live pleasantly enough for half a century afterwards; and I daresay I can do as they have done. If the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, I suppose the hawks and vultures take care of themselves. I have tried my luck as a shorn lamb, and the tempest has been very bitter for me; so I have no alternative but to join the vultures."

Mary Anne Kepp stared wonderingly at her mother's lodger. She had some notion that he had been saying something wicked and blasphemous; but she was too ignorant and too innocent to follow his meaning.

"O, pray don't talk in that wild way, sir," she entreated. "It makes me so unhappy to hear you go on like that."

"And why should any-thing that I say make you unhappy, Mary Anne?" asked the lodger earnestly.

There was something in his tone that set her pale face on fire with unwonted crimson, and she bent very low over her work to hide those painful blushes. She did not know that the Captain's tone presaged a serious address; she did not know that the grand crisis of her life was close upon her.

Horatio Paget had determined upon making a sacrifice. The doctor had told him that he owed his life to this devoted girl; and he would have been something less than man if he had not been moved with some grateful emotion. He was grateful; and in the dreary hours of his slow recovery he had ample leisure for the contemplation of the woman to whom he owed so much, if his poor worthless life could indeed be much. He saw that she was devoted to him; that she loved him more truly than he had ever been conscious of being loved before. He saw too that she was beautiful. To an ugly woman Captain Paget might have felt extremely grateful; but he could never have thought of an ugly woman as he thought of Mary Anne Kepp. The end of his contemplation and his deliberation came to this: She was beautiful, and she loved him, and his life was utterly wretched and lonely; so he determined upon proving his gratitude by a sublime sacrifice. Before the girl had lifted her face from the needlework over which she had bent to hide her blushes, Horatio Paget had asked her to be his wife. Her emotion almost overpowered her as she tried to answer him; but she *struggled* against it bravely, and came to the sofa on which he lay and *dropped upon her knees* by his side. The beggar-maid who was wooed

by a king could have felt no deeper sense of her lover's condescension than that which filled the heart of this poor simple girl as she knelt by her mother's gentleman-lodger.

"I—to be *your* wife!" she exclaimed. "O, surely, sir, you cannot mean it?"

"But I do mean it, with all my heart and soul, my dear," answered the Captain. "I'm not offering you any grand chance, Mary Anne; for I'm about as low down in the world as a man can be. But I don't mean to be poor all my life. Come, my dear, don't cry," he exclaimed, just a little impatiently—for the girl had covered her face with her hands, and tears were dropping between the poor hard-working fingers—"but lift up your head and tell me whether you will take a faded old bachelor for your husband or not."

Horatio Paget had admired many women in the bright years of his youth, and had fancied himself desperately in love more than once in his life; but it is doubtful whether the mighty passion had ever really possessed the Captain's heart, which was naturally cold and sluggish, rarely fluttered by any emotion that was not engendered of selfishness. Horatio had set up an idol and had invented a religion for himself very early in life; and that idol was fashioned after his own image, and that religion had its beginning and end in his own pleasure. He might have been flattered and pleased by Miss Kepp's agitation; but he was ill and peevish; and having all his life been subject to a profound antipathy to feminine tearfulness, the girl's display of emotion annoyed him.

"Is it to be yes, or no, my dear?" he asked, with some vexation in his tone.

Mary Anne looked up at him with tearful, frightened eyes.

"O, yes, sir, if I can be any use to you, and nurse you when you are ill, and work for you till I work my fingers to the bone."

She clenched her hands spasmodically as she spoke. In imagination she was already toiling and striving for the god of her idolatry—the GENTLEMAN whose varnished boots had been to her as a glimpse of another and a fairer world than that represented by Tulliver's Terrace, Old Kent Road. But Captain Paget checked her enthusiasm by a gentle gesture of his attenuated hands.

"That will do, my dear," he murmured languidly; "I'm not very strong yet, and any thing in the way of fuss is inexpressibly painful to me. Ah, my poor child," he exclaimed pityingly, "if you could have seen a dinner at the Marquis of Hertford's, you would have understood how much can be achieved without fuss. But I am talking of things you don't understand. You will be my wife; and a very good, kind, obedient little wife, I have no doubt. That is all settled. As for working for me, my love, it would be about as much as these poor little hands could do to earn me a cigar a-day—and I seldom smoke less than half-a-dozen cigars; so, you see, that is all so much affectionate non-

sense. And now you may wake your mother, my dear; for I want to take a little nap, and I can't close my eyes while that good soul is snoring so intolerably; but not a word about our little arrangement, Mary Anne, till you and your mother are alone."

And hereupon the Captain spread a handkerchief over his face and subsided into a gentle slumber. The little scene had fatigued him; though it had been so quietly enacted, that Mrs. Kepp had slept on undisturbed by the brief fragment of domestic drama performed within a few yards of her uneasy arm-chair. Her daughter awoke her presently, and she resumed her needle-work, while Mary Anne made some tea for the beloved sleeper. The cups and saucers made more noise to-night than they were wont to make in the girl's careful hands. The fluttering of her heart seemed to communicate itself to the tips of her fingers, and the jingling of the crockery-ware betrayed the intensity of her emotion. He was to be her husband! She was to have a gentleman for a husband; and such a gentleman! Out of such base trifles as a West-end tailor's coat and a West-end workman's boots may be engendered the purest blossom of womanly love and devotion. Wisely may the modern philosopher cry that the history of the world is only a story of old clothes. Mary Anne had begun by admiring the graces of Stultz and Hoby, and now she was ready to lay down her life for the man who wore the perishing garments!

Miss Kepp obeyed her lover's behest; and it was only on the following day, when she and her mother were alone together in the dingy little kitchen below Captain Paget's apartments, that she informed that worthy woman of the honour which had been vouchsafed to her. And thereupon Mary Anne endured the first of the long series of disappointments which were to arise out of her affection for the penniless Captain. The widow was a woman of the world, and was obstinately blind to the advantages of a union with a ruined gentleman of fifty.

"How's he to keep you, I should like to know?" Mrs. Kepp exclaimed, as the girl stood blushing before her after having told her story; "if he can't pay me regular—and you know the difficulty I've had to get his money, Mary Anne. If he can't keep hisself, how's he to keep you?"

"Don't talk like that, mother," cried the girl, wincing under her parent's practical arguments; "you go on as if all I cared for was being fed and clothed. Besides, Captain Paget is not going to be poor always. He told me so last night, when he—"

"*He* told you so!" echoed the honest widow with unmitigated scorn; "hasn't he told me times and often that I should have my rent regular after this week, and regular after that week; and have I *ever* had it regular? And ain't I keeping him out of charity now—a poor widow-woman like me—which I may be wanting charity myself before long; and if it wasn't for your whimpering and going on he'd have been

out of the house three weeks ago, when the doctor said he was well enough to be moved; for I ast him."

"And you'd have turned him out to die in the streets, mother!" cried Mary; "I didn't think you were so 'artless."

From this time there was ill-feeling between Mrs. Kepp and her daughter, who had been hitherto one of the most patient and obedient of children. The fanatic can never forgive the wretch who disbelieves in the divinity of his god; and women who love as blindly and foolishly as Mary Anne Kepp are the most bigoted of worshippers. The girl could not forgive her mother's disparagement of her idol,—the mother had no mercy upon her daughter's folly; and after much wearisome contention and domestic misery—carefully hidden from the penniless sybarite in the parlour—after many tears and heart-burnings, and wakeful nights and prayerful watches, Mary Anne Kepp consented to leave the house quietly one morning with the gentleman-lodger while the widow had gone to market. Miss Kepp left a piteous little note for her mother, rather ungrammatical, but very womanly and tender, imploring pardon for her want of duty; and, "O, mother, if you knew how good and noble he is, you could not be angry with me for loving him as I do, and we shall come back to you after our marriage, which you will be paid up honourable to the last farthing."

After writing this epistle in the kitchen, with more deliberation and more smudging than Captain Paget would have cared to behold in the bride of his choice, Mary Anne attired herself in her Sabbath-day raiment, and left Tulliver's Terrace with the Captain in a cab. She would fain have taken a little lavender-paper-covered box that contained the remainder of her wardrobe; but after surveying it with a shudder, Captain Paget told her that such a box would condemn them *any where*.

"You may get on sometimes without luggage, my dear," he said sententially; "but with such luggage as *that*, never!"

The girl obeyed without comprehending. It was not often that she understood her lover's meaning; nor did he particularly care that she should understand him. He talked to her rather in the same spirit in which one talks to a faithful canine companion—as Napoleon III. may talk to his favourite Nero: "I have great plans yet unfulfilled, my honest Nero, though you may not be wise enough to guess their nature. And we must have another Boulevard, old fellow; and we must make things secure in Mexico; and settle that little dispute about Venetia; and we must do something for those unfortunate Poles, eh—good dog?" and so on.

Captain Paget drove straight to a registrar's-office, where the new marriage-act enabled him to unite himself to Miss Kepp *sans façon*, in presence of the cabman and a woman who had been cleaning the doorstep. The Captain went through the brief ceremonial as coolly as if it had been the settlement of a water-rate, and was angered by the tears that

poor Mary Anne shed under her cheap black veil. He had forgotten the poetic superstition in favour of a wedding-ring, but he slipped a little onyx ring off his own finger and put it on the clumsier finger of his bride. It was the last of his jewels—the rejected of the pawnbrokers, who, not being learned in antique intaglios, had condemned the ring as trumpery. There is always something a little ominous in the bridegroom's forgetfulness of that simple golden circle which typifies an eternal union; and a superstitious person might have drawn a sinister augury from the subject of Captain Paget's intaglio, which was a head of Nero—an emperor whose wife was by no means the happiest of women. But as neither Mary Anne nor the registrar, neither the cabman nor the char-woman who had been cleaning the doorstep, had ever heard of Nero, and as Horatio Paget was much too indifferent to be superstitious, there was no one to draw evil inferences: and Mary Anne went away with her gentleman husband, proud and happy, with a happiness that was only disturbed now and then by the image of an infuriated mother.

Captain Paget took his bride to some charming apartments in Half-moon Street, Mayfair; and she was surprised to hear him tell the landlady that he and his wife had just arrived from Devonshire, and that they meant to stay a week or so in London, *en passant*, before starting for the Continent.

"My wife has spent the best part of her life in the country," said the Captain, "so I suppose I must show her some of the sights of London in spite of the abominable weather. But the deuce of it is, that my servant has misunderstood my directions, and gone on to Paris with the luggage. However, we can set that all straight to-morrow."

Nothing could be more courteously acquiescent than the manner of the landlady; for Captain Paget had offered her references, and the people to whom he referred were among the magnates of the land. The Captain knew enough of human nature to know that if references are only sufficiently imposing, they are very unlikely to be verified. The swindler who refers his dupe to the Duke of Sutherland and Baring Brothers has a very good chance of getting his respectability accepted without inquiry, on the mere strength of those sacred names.

From this time until the day of her death Mary Anne Paget very seldom heard her husband make any statement which she did not know to be false. He had joined the ranks of the vultures. He had lain down upon his bed of sickness a gentlemanly beggar; he arose from that couch of pain and weariness a swindler.

Now began those petty shifts and miserable falsifications whereby the birds of prey thrive upon the flesh and blood of hapless pigeons. Now the doves were fluttered by a new destroyer—a gentlemanly vulture, whose suave accents and perfect manners were fatal to the *unwary*. Henceforth Horatio Cromie Nugent Paget flourished and *fattened upon the folly of his fellow-men*. As promoter of joint-stock

companies that never saw the light; as treasurer of loan-offices where money was never lent; as a gentleman with capital about to introduce a novel article of manufacture from the sale of which a profit of five thousand a-year would infallibly be realised, and desirous to meet with another gentleman of equal capital; as the mysterious X. Y. Z. who will—for so small a recompense as thirty postage-stamps—impart the secret of an elegant and pleasing employment, whereby seven-pound-ten a-week may be made by any individual, male or female;—under every flimsy disguise with which the swindler hides his execrable form, Captain Paget plied his cruel trade, and still contrived to find fresh dupes. Of course there were occasions when the pigeons were slow to flutter into the fascinating snare, and when the vulture had a bad time of it; and it was a common thing for Captain Paget to sink from the splendour of Mayfair or St. James's Street into some dingy transpontine hiding-place. But he never went back to Tulliver's Terrace, though Mary Anne pleaded piteously for the payment of her poor mother's debt. When her husband was in funds, he patted her head affectionately, and told her that he would see about it—*i.e.* the payment of Mrs. Kepp's bill: while, if she ventured to mention the subject to him when his purse was scantily furnished, he would ask her fiercely how he was to satisfy her mother's extortionate claims when he had not so much as a sixpence for his own use?

Mrs. Kepp's bill was never paid, and Mary Anne never saw her mother's face again. Mrs. Paget was one of those meek, loving creatures who are essentially cowardly. She could not bring herself to encounter her mother without the money owed by the Captain; she could not bring herself to endure the widow's reproaches, the questioning that would be so horribly painful to answer, the taunts that would torture her poor sorrowful heart.

Alas for her brief dream of love and happiness! Alas for her foolish worship of the gentleman lodger! She knew now that her mother had been wiser than herself, and that it would have been better for her if she had renounced the shadowy glory of an alliance with Horatio Cromie Nugent Paget; whose string of high-sounding names, written on the cover of an old wine-book, had not been without its influence on the ignorant girl. The widow's daughter knew very little happiness during the few years of her wedded life. To be hurried from place to place, to dine in Mayfair to-day, and to eat your dinner at a shilling ordinary in Whitecross Street to-morrow; to wear fine clothes that have not been paid for, and to take them off your back at a moment's notice when they are required for the security of the friendly pawnbroker; to know that your life is a falsehood and a snare, and that to leave a place is to leave contempt and execration behind you;—these things constitute the burden of a woman whose husband lives by his wits. And over and above these miseries, Mrs. Paget had to endure all the variations of temper to which the schemer is subject. If the pigeons dropped readily

into the snare, and if their plumage proved well worth the picking, the Captain was very kind to his wife, after his own fashion: that is to say, he took her out with him, and after lecturing her angrily because of the shabbiness of her bonnet, bought her a new one, and gave her a dinner that made her ill, and then sent her home in a cab, while he finished the evening in more congenial society. But if the times were bad for the vulture tribe—O, then, what a gloomy companion for the domestic hearth was the elegant Horatio! After smiling his false smile all day, while rage and disappointment were gnawing at his heart, it was a kind of relief to the Captain to be moody and savage by his own fireside. The human vulture has something of the ferocity of his feathered prototype. The man who lives upon his fellow-men has need to harden his heart; for one sentiment of compassion, one touch of human pity, would shatter his finest scheme in the hour of its fruition. Horatio Paget and compassion parted fellowship very early in the course of his unscrupulous career. What if the pigeon has a widowed mother dependent on his prosperity, or half-a-dozen children who will be involved in his ruin? Is the hawk to forego his natural prey for any such paltry consideration as a vulgar old woman or a brood of squalling brats?

Captain Paget was not guilty of any persistent unkindness towards the woman whose fate he had deigned to link with his own. The consciousness that he had conferred a supreme honour on Mary Anne Kepp by offering her his hand, and a share of his difficulties, never deserted him. He made no attempt to elevate the ignorant girl into companionship with himself. He shuddered when she misplaced her h's, and turned from her peevishly with a muttered oath when she was more than usually ungrammatical: but though he found it disagreeable to hear her, he would have found it troublesome to set her right; and trouble was a thing which Horatio Paget held in gentlemanly aversion. The idea that the mode of his existence could be repulsive to his wife—that this low-born and low-bred girl could have scruples that he never felt, and might suffer agonies of remorse and shame of which his coarser nature was incapable—never entered the Captain's mind. It would have been too great an absurdity for the daughter of plebeian Kepps to affect a tenderness of conscience unknown to the scion of Pagets and Cromies and Nugents. Mary Anne was afraid of her elegant husband: and she worshipped and waited upon him in meek silence, keeping the secret of her own sorrows, and keeping it so well that he never guessed the manifold sources of that pallor of countenance and hollow brightness of eye which had of late annoyed him when he looked at his wife. She had borne him a child; a sweet girl baby, with those great black eyes that always have rather a weird look in the face of infancy; and she would fain have clung to the infant as the hope and consolation of her joyless life. But the vulture is not a domestic bird, and a baby would have been an impediment in the rapid hegiras which Captain Paget and his wife were wont to make. The Captain

put an advertisement in a daily paper before the child was a week old; and in less than a fortnight after Mary Anne had looked at the baby face for the first time, she was called upon to surrender her treasure to an elderly woman of fat and greasy aspect, who had agreed to bring the infant up "by hand" in a miserable little street in a remote and dreary district lying between Vauxhall and Battersea.

Mary Anne gave up the child uncomplainingly; as meekly as she would have surrendered herself if the Captain had brought a masked executioner to her bed-side, and had told her a block was prepared for her in the adjoining chamber. She had no idea of resistance to the will of her husband. She endured her existence for nearly five years after the birth of her child, and during those miserable years the one effort of her life was to secure the miserable stipend paid for the little girl's maintenance; but before the child's fifth birthday the mother faded off the face of the earth. She died in a miserable lodging not very far from Tulliver's Terrace, expiring in the arms of a landlady who comforted her in her hour of need as she had comforted the ruined gentleman. Captain Paget was a prisoner in Whitecross Street at the time of his wife's death, and was much surprised when he missed her morning visits and the little luxuries she had been wont to bring him.

He had missed her for more than a week, and had written to her twice—rather angrily on the second occasion—when a rough unkempt boy in corduroy waited upon him in the dreary ward, where he and half-a-dozen other depressed and melancholy men sat at little tables writing letters, or pretending to read newspapers, and looking at one another furtively every now and then. There is no prisoner so distracted by his own cares that he will not find time to wonder what his neighbour is "in for."

The boy had received instructions to be careful how he imparted his dismal tidings to the "poor dear gentleman;" but the lad grew nervous and bewildered at sight of the Captain's fierce hook-nose and scrutinising gray eyes, and blurted out his news without any dismal note of warning.

"The lady died at two o'clock this morning, please, sir; and mother said I was to come and tell you, please, sir."

Captain Paget staggered under the blow.

"Good God!" he cried, as he dropped upon a rickety Windsor chair, that creaked under his weight; "and I did not even know that she was ill!"

Still less did he know that all her married life had been one long heart-sickness—one monotonous agony of remorse and shame.



Edith Dunn del.

W. L. Thomas sc.

TEN AND TWENTY.



In Eton's classic groves I strayed,
 To pick up learning—I'm afraid
 I "picked up" more at cricket ;
 My boyish love was left to fate,
 When pulling in the College Eight ;
 I quite forgot my little mate,
 In dreams of double-wicket !

And now I chance to meet again,
 Not saucy Kate, but fair Miss Fane,
 The loveliest of belles ;
 Who rules the season—for I know,
 At party, *fête*, or flower-show,
 In opera-box or in the Row,
 She queens it o'er the swells.

Ah ! since that rosy laughing child
 Would jump upon her pony wild,
 And round the paddock canter,
 Or madly with black Hector race,
 Or climb for nests in Lyndith Chase—
 For which she got in sad disgrace—
 O tempora mutantur !

For Kate will never know me now,
 But with a studied, solemn bow,
 She'll gaze with manner blank.
 Not know me ? How her eyes flash bright !
 She shakes my hand, and grasps it tight,
 And laughingly exclaims, "I'm right—
 'Tis my old playmate Frank !"



HILL SCANDALS

BY SIDNEY L. BLANCHARD

WE are always hearing from India of Hill Scandals. They seem to be an institution in the country. Are they of a class by themselves? Do they differ from scandals that occur in the plains? Are valley scandals in any way to be distinguished from them? Such questions may well occur to the uninitiated reader. The fact is that Hill Scandals are simply the representative scandals of the Empire. Scandals are not un plentiful in the plains; and where we venture to have any thing to do with valleys, they assert themselves and frequently come to the front. But the Hills are their home. Elsewhere mountainous regions usually claim a moral superiority over flat country. One hears sometimes in poetry of a vale inspiring contentment, or some other of the calmer virtues; but no one has a word to say for the level. It is in the mountains that people are true to their fatherland and their first love and all the finer instincts of their nature. Why is it, then, that in India the Hills (they are mountains, but our countrymen take a delight in degrading grandeur to which they are accustomed) bear such a bad name for scandals? Well, the main reason is that the Hills are not the homes of Anglo-Indians, not even their habitual residence. They betake themselves to their slopes as an occasional retreat, for the sake of health, or pleasure, or a judicious combination of both; and the result is too frequently a disastrous amount of success. The political consequences of the Hills would make a long catalogue of disasters. There was a distinguished party of public men once up at Simla, who, had they been merely a distinguished party of private men, would have found a safety-valve for their superfluous spirits in winning one another's money, or flirting with one another's wives. But their exuberance took a political direction, and the consequence was—the Afghan war. Nothing so mischievous as that has since been done in the Hills; but they are still the cause of a great deal being done in the plains that ought not to be done at all. "If we do not get rid of Simla," said a sagacious Anglo-Indian some years ago, "Simla will get rid of us." And it is a remarkable fact that whenever any thing is going wrong in India, the authorities, instead of meeting it upon the spot, are always telegraphing about it from the Hills. A frontier war, or a famine, are favourite occasions for absence in these charming retreats; and in the latter event—as recent accounts testify—it is quite possible for half the population of a province to die of starvation.

But I will not venture to dwell upon this disaster, or I may say *worse of the Hills* than I wish. For the most part, the evil that

they do is of a social kind, and does not extend beyond their holiday visitors. These are mainly members of the services—civil and military—who go up on leave for limited periods, and are naturally inclined to make the most of their time. And this, it must be confessed, is usually a very harmless process. The majority are contented with such ordinary enjoyments as are to be derived from living in a house having more or less the appearance of a Swiss cottage, situated on the terraced side of a mountain at a fabulous height above the level of the sea. With dwelling in a paradise of pines and rhododendrons, to say nothing of wild flowers of all kinds in prodigal profusion, and more luxuriant than tame flowers elsewhere. With being able, on account of the genial cold and rarefied atmosphere, which does not absorb the rays of the sun, to wander about all day in defiance of that luminary. With walking or riding, according to choice, up and down the steep paths, along the pleasant terraces, over the roofs of the houses, which at a short distance off look as if perched upon each other's heads. Or it may be with a jaunt into the interior, where the stealthy hyena and the cheerful baboon of daily life are varied by such incitements to sportmanship as the leopard and the bear. And further, with having the club as a continual resource, the theatre as an occasional one, and balls and dinner-parties a perennial source of active and not merely passive satisfaction.

These characteristics are common, if not to all the minor Hill stations, at any rate to Simla and Mussoorie, the favourite sanatoria of the North-west. These, which are only some twelve marches apart, have most points of resemblance in common; the difference being that Simla is more grand than Mussoorie, and Mussoorie more pretty than Simla. Looking upon them both as ladies, I should say that Simla would have great proud eyes, masses of dark hair; would look well in velvet and diamonds; and if she picked you up to take you any where, would come in a carriage on C-springs, with a coronet on the panel: while Mussoorie would have vain rather than proud eyes, and be inclined to hair of the agreeable carrot colour now in vogue; would be fresh rather than rich in her toilette; would probably wear a turban hat; and if you called to conduct her to a croquet party, would take your arm without its being offered, and stop every two minutes to stare at the shop-windows. Does the reader understand what I mean now? Not that Simla is otherwise than affable, or even free-and-easy, or even a great deal too free-and-easy at times. It is a little more grand in its manner, that is all; and this is accounted for by the fact that the Viceroyal court is usually there in the season, in addition to the establishment of the Commander-in-Chief. For courts would be courts, even though they were held in a two-pair back. I am convinced that if a Viceroy and his Aide-de-Camp were cast on a desert island, and had to live like a couple of Robinson Crusoes for twenty years, they would not forget their relative positions. The Viceroy, for instance, would

never have to chop the wood for his own fire; and although he might insist upon making his own goatskin breeches, the Aide-de-Camp would be in attendance to keep the needles threaded, and to hand the clasp-knife which would probably do duty for a pair of scissors.

The mention of an Aide-de-Camp reminds me that I have to deal with Hill Scandals; to which I shall add a few words about the plains, and some moral reflections of an appropriate character, from which I hope my readers, both in England and India, will derive advantage. The reason why there are more scandals—that is to say, more persons who conduct themselves improperly and get into scrapes—in the Hills than the plains is, in the first place, because the majority of them have nothing to do; and, in the second place, because they are in such an exuberant state of health and spirits, caused by the habitual society of either the lady in the black velvet and diamonds, or the lady in the turban hat and balmorals (I forgot to say that Mussoorie would wear balmorals), as to use up even the charming succession of disportments which I have described as being at their disposal. Moreover, the society, though numerous, is unvaried. There are arrivals and departures; but the *personnel* of the place remains at the end much as it was in the beginning; and that state of things lasting for several months together leads to the establishment of tolerably intimate relations between those who do not happen to quarrel. People know a great deal about one another in the plains, where your income is ascertainable to a fraction, and the amount of your debts calculable with almost equal accuracy; where your position and prospects are sharply defined in the clear mental atmosphere, and your measure is taken morally with a precision which might reduce the art of knowing the worst to one of the exact sciences. Nevertheless, in this kind of information the Hills beat the plains hollow. What is merely within your reach when below, is forced upon your attention when above; and that dreadful condition of having nothing to do makes you a more liable recipient than you would otherwise be. It is the intimate knowledge which every body has of every body else which is the occasion of most of the scandals that occur in India; and the Hills, as we see, are more prolific in producing them, simply because all the conditions are intensified in their case. Even the slight check imposed by what passes for “the public” in the work-a-day world of the plains scarcely exists in the holiday atmosphere of the hills. The few tradesmen who have their abode in the latter regions are there for the purpose of making their fortunes out of the wants of the rest. They are quite as independent as is compatible with that object; nobody will deny that. And they have a few companions of their own class who are “up,” like other people, for the benefit of their health and animal spirits. But these do not, of course, constitute a public; and not even such a necessity as a newspaper seems to be in the most remote parts of the Empire, *though several times planted, has ever been known thoroughly to take*

root. *En revanche*, there is a great deal of writing to the papers down below, in reference to every proceeding of the community above, on the part of "our own correspondents" of all classes. To every locality in the plains where people would care to know, the minutest particulars of what passes in the Hills are furnished by the most observing pens. At the beginning of the season a careful estimate is made of what is to come; the question whether the place is to be moderately or immoderately attended, and the prospects of amusement in store, being as gravely discussed as if they were matters of important concern. As things progress, you are duly informed of the names of distinguished arrivals, what houses they have taken (the houses are all called by the prettiest names—"Annandale," "Melrose," "Fairlight," &c.), and how long their leave is to last. A careful note is made too of marriageable young ladies—"spins," as they are irreverently called; and alliances to be—which include not to be very often—are referred to with almost American freedom. The doings at Government House are of course chronicled with avidity; but more than this, balls, pic-nics, archery meetings, assemblies of every kind, are recorded as the staple news of the place. Indeed, there is nothing else to record, unless some food for political gossip happens to be available, which it very seldom is. I once heard of a "leading lady" at a certain hill station who wrote down to one of the North-west papers an account of a ball at her own house, in which she gave a satirical picture of some of her own guests; including ladies of course, and not only holding their dresses up to ridicule, but criticising the *chaussures* which were thus disclosed.

In former days personal writing was tolerated far more than it is at present, when respectable journals keep clear of it as far as is possible in the midst of so very intimate a society. The practice used to be a constant cause of duels, and was almost as bad as balls in this respect. A lady now advanced in years, who had formerly been a *burra beebie* in Calcutta, and a great object of admiration, assured me that in her time two or three "meetings" were almost inevitably the consequence of a large ball; and even in these latter days, or at any rate a few years ago, it used to be said that a "row" followed a ball almost as certainly as the report follows the flash of a piece of artillery. "The Dinapore Scandal," of which so much was made a few years ago, began at a ball, owing to a certain brigadier being more assiduous than was considered necessary in replacing a lady's fallen scarf upon her shoulders. There was a great deal of reference to balls in the Mhow Scandal; not that Mhow scandal in which Colonel Crawley was concerned, but *one* of the several which have occurred within the recollection of most of us at that interesting station. Balls were conspicuously associated with scandals which were talked about, though more or less successfully hushed up, at Simla not many seasons ago; and at Bombay, during a period when the Western Presidency was not remarkable for the strict propriety which has characterised it for some time past, balls continually

figured in local disputes. In Sir Charles Napier's time this was especially the case at Simla, where intoxication upon such occasions cost several officers their commission. It was upon gambling and fraudulent transactions connected with money, however, that Sir Charles came out in his strongest colours. Such a large number of officers of the Indian army were at that time so disgracefully in debt as to affect the character of the entire service; and to this, as well as to the high play by which it was partly caused, Napier determined to put a stop. There had been great laxity in the way of repression for many years; and though officers were frequently tried by court-martial, convictions were very difficult to obtain. So Sir Charles made war against the courts, bullied them into re-considering their verdicts, and in a very bad case, where the guilt was palpable, he would, though an acquittal were persisted in, exercise his own authority, and remove the offender from the service. Some of the lectures which he appended to the official reports of these proceedings were models of Napierian vigour. One of his commentaries he concluded by saying, "These orders may seem severe, but the commander-in-chief intends them to be so." Upon another occasion he said that a court was utterly unfit for its functions; the president, the members, the judge-advocate—all concerned—were equally incompetent. Remarks of the kind might be quoted by the dozen. There was a great gambling case once at Simla, known as the Great Gambling Case to this day, in which there was something to do with unfair play. The demonstration which Sir Charles made about this affair had a very wholesome effect; and his general *razzia* against the drunken and indebted cleared the service of those who had brought upon it disgrace. After that time there was a marked improvement in military manners in India; and at present there is no reason for supposing them worse than the manners, military or civil, of our countrymen elsewhere. Brandy-panee, like fire, is a good servant, but a bad master, and there are not wanting men of all classes in India who submit themselves to its dictation with too much amiability; but decidedly fewer scandals arise from this cause than of yore; and those who indulge, do so for the most part decorously, and destroy their constitutions with some regard to gentlemanlike deportment.

Of the serious scandals which from time to time arise in India, most may be traced more to the familiar terms of intercourse upon which our countrymen live together, and the limited range of association, which begets gossiping and narrows the moral perceptions, than to drinking or even gambling. The original offence may arise, as in the Hills is usually the case, from the causes which I have already assigned—exuberant animal spirits, and the want of something better to do. But let the affair once come before authority, and the *parish* view of its importance, which is sure to be taken, displays it in the *most conspicuous* light, lays it bare before the public for months per-

haps together, and in short makes the most that could possibly be made of it if the purpose were scandal itself. This is to a great extent the fault of the machinery devised for dealing with military transgressions, and to some extent the fault of authority which employs it without sufficient discretion. If it be otherwise, why do we not hear of civilians getting into scrapes at least with some approach to the frequency of military men? There are reasons why they should not get into quite so many. They have more work to keep them out of mischief, and more money to keep them out of debt. But they have the same tastes, the same passions, the same weaknesses of every kind; and some of them do occasionally get into trouble in consequence. But in their case the affair is quietly arranged; there is no necessary resort to peculiar forms of procedure, which puzzle those who have to conduct them as much as any body else, and of which the consequences are arbitrary and inevitable, admitting of no modification which circumstances might dictate. A civilian, ranking as a gentleman, is as jealous of his honour as a military man. He is not called upon to fight for the State; he is not allowed by law, nor of late years by society, to fight for himself; yet no man may impugn his courage without having to answer, in one way or another, for the consequences. Somehow a civilian, even in India, manages to keep his honour intact without any special machinery for the purpose. Even if he bring himself within reach of the law, the consequences are not unnecessarily scandalous. He is tried by a competent tribunal, which disposes of the case by means of intelligible forms, framed for the purpose of promoting justice. But the military man never knows when he is safe. The court that tries him is of such an anomalous kind, that neither its president, members, nor the judge-advocate himself, are certain of the extent of the powers they exercise. Every individual engaged feels that he is himself on his trial, and may be excused if his first object be to keep out of harm's way. The consequence is that the majority of verdicts are given against the prisoners. It is the easiest course, and one usually understood to be most acceptable to authority.

And here, without endorsing for a moment what appears to be the popular idea, that when a great man and a small man fall out, the great man must be in the wrong, I cannot forbear remarking that military authority in India is not quite the same as military authority in England, or in a colony where there is any thing like a public. If the civil service takes the lead in society, as it professes to do, the military service has naturally enormous power and importance. In all matters affecting its own administration it is independent of the civil authority; and every officer in command, from the Chief downwards, is a despot as far as his range extends. This necessity of discipline leads to occasional scandals in this country, and must do so any where, until officers are more perfect than other men. But in India the evil is aggravated by the absence of healthy restraint, and the natural tendency of any

one class who live apart, or nearly so, from the rest of society, to think themselves very much more important persons than they really are.

This delusion does not sit very gracefully upon the smaller people, and when it takes possession of the larger, is decidedly unbecoming. Moreover, a Captain who thinks Colonels of himself, or a Lieutenant whose idea of his own consequence is measured at least by a majority, are comparatively harmless persons. But a Colonel commanding a regiment, or a General commanding a division—when officers of that kind of rank get it into their heads that they are greater men than they be, their capacity for mischief is immense. And if a colonel or a general can do so much, what are we to say for a commander-in-chief? Let him once entertain an idea of himself as a cleverer and more important person than other people think him or he really is, and his power enables him to do incalculable harm. The responsibility is something akin to that of a man whose dreams should, whether he wished it or not, all come to pass in real life. The effect would be very pleasant while he was in good health and a happy frame of mind, and was conferring fantastic forms of delight and out-of-the-way kinds of happiness upon people right and left. But let any thing go wrong with him; let him have *too* great an opinion of his own superiority to other people; let him only derange his system temporarily by such a thing as a crab-supper, and what enormous miseries might he not inflict upon his fellow-creatures! That things will sometimes go wrong with men possessed of enormous powers in a country where they can exercise them with impunity, is only to be expected; and the effects of their conceit or crab-suppers, as the case may be, are sometimes very serious.

As regards the quarrel between the Commander-in-Chief in India and his Aide-de-Camp—which I may as well say suggested these remarks—there has certainly been a most reckless use of power on the only side which had any power to use. The contest was of course hopeless from the first, as far as Captain Jervis was concerned. It may be tyrannous for a giant to use his strength like a giant; but it is too much to expect that he will use it like a dwarf. With the instincts which seem to have animated Sir William Mansfield throughout the proceedings, he could no more have moderated his force than the Irish gentleman could help making a noise with his pistol, though he promised to “fire as softly as he could.”

If a Commander-in-Chief quarrels with a Captain, and the affair gets to a court-martial, the Captain must be ruined if the Chief chooses to use all his authority; for if the court acquits, the Chief can refuse to confirm the proceedings; and if they will not alter their decision, the Chief can declare the prisoner guilty on his own authority, and inflict upon him what punishment he thinks proper. This has been practically done in the present case, for the recommendation to mercy amounted to an acquittal.

Now without disputing the Horatian maxim about not changing your nature with your skies, it may be safely said that this last "Hill Scandal" would not have occurred in England, though the Commander-in-Chief and his Aide-de-Camp had occupied the same relative positions. In this country the great man would not have made the little man a mere servant; and the little man, on the other hand, would not have assumed unwarrantable freedoms. The kind of service which Sir William Mansfield expected from his Aides-de-Camp was not very different from those which Aides-de-Camp are accustomed to render, except so far as keeping regular household accounts and managing a farm are concerned; though as a general rule the duties are placed upon a friendly footing. But Sir William Mansfield seems to have been always complaining of not getting enough respect and attention, with regard to which I should think him rather more exacting than most of the crowned heads in Europe. His written regulations for the guidance of his staff would be worthy of the court of France in the latter days of Louis XIV. Not only are the substantial duties all strictly defined, but provision is made for the deportment of the Aides-de-Camp to the guests—when they are to rise from their seats at the dinner-table, how soon they may leave the drawing-room, and so forth. Moreover, they are enjoined to consider themselves as much under the command of the Commander-in-Chief's wife as of the Commander-in-Chief himself. I will say nothing worse of all this than describing it as Indian—explainable by the causes pointed out. And Captain Jervis's free-and-easy use of the stores was Indian also. The proceeding sounds strange in this country; but the assumption that the prisoner intended to pay is quite justified by custom in India, where people continually lend one another wine or beer or mutton, or other articles of domestic requirement, when at out-of-the-way stations, where supplies are precarious. His undertaking the management of the farm is Indian again. All people who care for good mutton up the country join together—generally in parties of four—and keep a flock of sheep, the management of which is assigned to one of the number. In this and many other ways Indians take a practical part in their domestic affairs. How far the care of the farm was consistent with the duties of an Aide-de-Camp is quite another matter. I am only explaining how Captain Jervis got into *cette galère*.

Half the Indian scandals, in fact, would never occur in England. Take, for instance, those in the Inniskilling Dragoons. The officers of the regiment would probably have found much more pleasant employment than getting up a conspiracy against their Colonel. The Colonel, if he chose to adopt such a course as imprisoning an adverse witness, would never have been able to do so for months together with impunity. And supposing that he did, the witness would not be likely to die of the confinement in this country.

One of the thoroughly Indian signs in all these scandals is the

deadly animosity which actuates people when they begin to quarrel—the proverbial result of the dearest friends falling out. There is no quarter given or expected. It is war to the knife. It is fortunate that Sir William Mansfield and his Aide-de-Camp met only in court, or a personal encounter of some kind would have been more than probable. As it was, a violent scene took place between the Chief's counsel and the Aide-de-Camp; nor could the latter resist a tempting opportunity which offered to horse-whip a hostile witness.

In illustration of the intimate relations of society which give intensity to these quarrels, I may mention that a high official at one of the hill stations once told me that he had great difficulty through "grass-widows" neglecting to pay their bills—the fault doubtless of the "grass-widowers" in the plains for not being more punctual with remittances. These ladies can apparently be sued—for debts relating to necessaries, I suppose—in the absence of their husbands; for the complaint made was, that whenever my friend ordered them to pay, he always received a pretty little note from the interesting defendant, saying that as he had been so *unkind* as to decide against her, he must lend her the money to meet the claim; it was his own fault, she could not help it, &c. With responsibilities like these, the judgment-seat becomes a post of danger as well as a post of honour.

The mention of "grass-widows" brings me to a fruitful source of Hill Scandals. The separation of husbands and wives—inevitable where the one wants health, and the other wants leisure—is objectionable, if only for the reason that the experiment of seeing how they can do without one another may be attended with success. Of late, however, it must be admitted that we have not heard of any very grave consequences arising from this cause; and one reason may be that the railways not only expedite, but lessen the fatigue of travelling, so that married people—whether in health or not—may manage to meet oftener, though condemned to be apart for a time. In these days, too, a lady in the position in question has at least very few bad examples about her, and must be irreproachable in her conduct, if she wishes to be an ornament of the Viceregal Court. The strictest propriety indeed is the fashion in India in all high places; and such is the care taken to prevent people from being out of the *mode*, that I heard of a lively lady (who always says more than she means) declaring the other day: "The clergyman is always telling us that it is difficult to be good; for my part I think that up here it is difficult to be bad." This, too, was at Simla. I promised to make some moral reflections, but perhaps this remark will do instead.

JACOB SNIDER, INVENTOR

THE struggles of inventive genius, the troubles of inventors, the injustice of individuals against them, have been the theme of many a harrowing narrative of fact, and would have been equally the subject of many a fiction but for the difficulties attendant on the latter task, which presupposes a larger acquaintance with the particulars of invention than any writer of fiction has yet been found to possess. Bulwer, in his *Last of the Barons*, has essayed the task, and, to competent apprehension, failed. In that great master's endeavour to expound so much of the principles of latent heat as was necessary to give to his tale verisimilitude he has made known his own ignorance of the topic he would handle. Dickens has hardly been more fortunate when making a similar attempt. Perhaps the most masterly rendering of the theme in a work of imagination is to be found in Balzac's *Recherche de l'Absolu*, in which his alchemist does not shock scientific perception, for the simple reason that the point of invention aimed at was indefinite; no mortal man then or now being able to imagine or figure to himself any definite scheme of metallic transmutation.

Jacob Snider is dead and buried. His body lies in Kensal Green, under what he so often in his moments of misery was wont to call the "accursed British sod." The daily press, which first denied his illness, and then, being taunted into action, blazoned forth his misery when it was already too late, records his being no longer. His very name seems passing out of public memory, after the wont of the names of other men dead and buried. Enfield resounds with the machinery fashioning his now celebrated arms; resounds night and day—even Sundays. He was stricken down just when his great work, that had extended over seven weary years, was completed. He died penniless, and in debt. He trusted to England's honour, and it failed him.

As if to leave no cause of accusation against his memory, no ground upon which England may solace her own shamed pride, Jacob Snider's was a character wholly free from the weak points alleged against inventors. He was provident, was economical; he kept accurate accounts; he was prompt in his engagements; kept regular books. There was nothing unconsidered or ill-arranged about him. In any ordinary bargain as between honourable men, Snider knew how to hold his own, and held it. This being so, the question will not fail to arise, whether the Government of this great country could have dealt by an inventor who laboured for it hard, who deserved of it well, who, through long years of suffering, slaved for it, starved for it—in the

bitter end to die for it—dealt by him less liberally, not to write less honourably, than would have happened between man and man?

If Snider were so wisely provident, why did he not make such a bargain with the Government as would have served his ends? That question will be asked by the public, not by inventors. The latter too well know that the Government of this country repudiates all bargains as between it and inventors. "*Trust to our honour,*" is what the Government says; "we listen to no conditions."

This is not figuratively written; it is a stern literal truth. Whether the honour of England be or be not, in respect to inventors, as a broken reed or a lying voice, as words written on the waters or whispered to the wind, let the history of Snider make known.

The absolute legal right of the British Government to take any invention it pleases; take it without consultation, treaty, compensation, or regard of the inventor—the public, any body—take it absolutely for nothing, if so willed, was established by the issue of the suit, *Feather versus The Queen*. That was ruled to be the law. Whether the ruling can be over-ruled remains to be seen.

That was a remarkable decision. By virtue of it, if virtue of iniquity there be, the British Government acquired a despotic power over inventors. It was a power that time had known before, when time was younger than to-day; it was a power bringing types to mind that were hoped to have passed away; one that, when mob-thronging, rail-breaking, unwashed, yellow clay-fashioned crockery-ware-moulded fellows threaten their betters, is called by evil names. It established a lawless law—one of might over right. Such was the law of Götz von Berlichingen and Front de Bœuf. Cumberland moss-troopers knew that law. It was Rob Roy's simple plan. It brings to mind Turpin's pistol-presentation drafts at sight; or the blander arguments, not less cogent, of Claude Duval.

Such, then, at present, is the law. It was arrived at tentatively. It was a decree too barbarous, too mediævally despotic for acceptance all at once. When Snider first came to England in 1859, the law was different. Then, guided by the evidence of his accurately kept diary, we shall find that, treating with the Government, he failed not to exercise the control incumbent on every prudent man. The law as it stood then subsequently found a new interpretation. Some big-wig lawyer, of bold conception and truly Bismarkian audacity, opened a Schleswig-Holstein campaign against inventive genius. He battled on a small inceptive scale; he won his small fight—he brought in a small bill: that bill became an act. Then the silence of desolation stole upon inventors. Pale men wept, and starved, and starving died. They muttered low, as poor Snider muttered. The nation heard it not; the law heeded it not. Some lawyer Bismark had made a desert, and called the silence peace.

Whilst we English, fooled by the cackle of our own crowing, were

valiantly upholding Sir William Armstrong's gun, and almost before the echo of foreigners' laughter at our crowing had died away, then the artillerist quondam lawyer knight, Oliver Twist like, suddenly found he wanted "more." In print the Armstrong gun was perfect, not in the field. Were it ever to become what newspapers had made it, perfection upon perfection would have to be piled on that already perfect gun. John Bull glorified himself. There was nobody like him. Rule Britannia! Long live Sir William! British coal and iron for ever! British pluck, British honour, British ingenuity!—it was all *British*, and confusion to the French. "There were secrets of construction about the Armstrong gun—so sacred as not to be even whispered at Woolwich." It was wonderful the accuracy of the Armstrong gun. The gulls and the wild geese killed (on paper) by Sir William's segment shells passes comprehension. There were other killings by those segment shells that "organs of the press" either did not know, or knowing, did not print. *In the Chinese war, lead-strippings from those segment shells fired at the Chinese killed our own men.*

Sir William began changing, improving, perfecting the perfect. Eclectic and not prejudiced Sir William cast about to take improvements wheresoever they might be found. But such notions as he wanted were under protection of the patent law. They were the fruits of the brains of others, who claimed similar rights to remuneration that Sir William himself had claimed. If taken, they had to be paid for at the inventors' own price. Thereupon Sir William Armstrong spoke strongly at Sheffield on the impolicy of patent laws. He proposed their abolition, as best for all. The bad points of these laws are salient. A more clumsy way of remunerating inventors it would be hard for a barbarian to have devised. But, then, inventors were not answerable for the existence of these laws. They had been decreed as other laws are decreed. Men of inventive genius would have willingly seen the laws on behalf of patents for invention swept away, on the understanding that their government had given them, or would give them, an equivalent. But when it was stolidly propounded that inventors could not advance any moral claim to the inventions of their brains as property, all the then existing patent laws were defended by men of fertile brains in technical things with a pertinacity not warranted by any intrinsic excellence of those laws, but under the control of the feeling that bad laws were better than no laws at all. Between man and man the patent laws continued to secure a meed of rough justice. Inventions were indeed too often unproductive to the inventor; monetary non-success was too often the sequence of monetary pressure; patents continued to be divided, hypothecated, bartered for a little money—the birthright was often disposed of for the mess of pottage; but disposed of, at any rate seemingly, between man and man, there was no appropriation without recompense, or, in plainer terms, *stealing outright.*

The issue of this debate and agitation was a certain Act of Parliament, by virtue of which the relations previously subsisting between Government and inventors of inventions needed by Government were essentially changed. It was decreed that upon the inception of the first stage of a patent, upon the inventor communicating to the patent-office the secret whereupon he desired to acquire a patent right, it should be obligatory on the patent officers to divulge the secret to certain government officials, who, if they should deem the subject of invention acceptable to or needed by the Government, should bar the future progress of the patent, and compensate the inventor by some equivalent reward. How the equivalent was to be determined remained a point in doubt. An equivalent was recognised nevertheless; and at that time there was no claim advanced to take an invention for nothing.

It would be hard to demonstrate, on any foundation of right and morality, wherefore between Government and inventor a different law should prevail than between inventor and the public. If a government needs inventive talent; if, in certain cases, government *must* use inventive talent, then it seems inconsistent with the high state of civilisation to which the world has arrived, and especially this country, that the law should affirm the using of such talent gratuitously, after no preliminary compact, giving no equivalent at all. Such, nevertheless, was the ruling in the memorable suit of Feather *versus* The Queen, and thus the law remains.

Nevertheless, in affirming this conclusion legally, no difference of opinion prevailed amongst men of whatever shade of politics as to the moral incumbency of Government to reward the originator of any government-adopted invention according to some equitable scale. This understood, it was hoped, nay believed, by many an inventor, that, as between himself and the Government, the issue would be more favourable than even had some law of agreement and contract prevailed. It was felt, and reasonably, that henceforward people of inventive genius taken up by the Government would be *on honour with the Government*, and therefore treated honourably. The assumption was not violent. What other belief would seem reasonable in the presence of all the majesty of imputed honour which our social and political system arrogates to itself? Without evidence damnatory and crushing, who among Englishmen would have believed it possible for the Government to have behaved more shabbily to an inventor—not to write cruelly—than a private gentleman would have done? These remarks are intended to clear the ground of certain objections that might have been possibly raised by persons not understanding the law and the facts bearing upon the case of Snider. This inventor was precluded from making any bargain. All the prudence and sagacity that would have stood him in such stead in any ordinary affair of private business was beside the *question now*. Once resolved to put his inventive talent at the dis-

posal of the Government, it only remained for him to trust implicitly to the honour of the Government. He had no alternative.

We now take up the history of Snider in so far as our pages will afford space to accomplish a task that could only be fully achieved by an entire volume. Such a volume is in progress, and will speedily appear; the materials, in the shape of copious diaries accurately kept by Snider himself, now lying before me.

Snider was originally a wine-merchant in Philadelphia, and had large transactions. He failed, but honourably failed, paying every body almost in full, and leaving him almost destitute. He came to England in March 1859, bringing with him a specimen of the Mont Storm breech-loader; a weapon intrinsically different from the one that now bears his name. It would more comport with the objects of a mechanical journal than with ours to enter into any details relative to the construction of that breech-loader. Suffice it to state that the Mont Storm gun did not use a cartridge carrying its own ignition, and needed capping like any ordinary musket or muzzle-loading fowling-piece. In 1859, and long subsequently, it was a fundamental maxim not only with our own war authorities, but those of every country save Prussia, that, assuming a system of breech-loading adapted for infantry, it must be such as permitted the use of the military cartridges then extant. Emphatically the proposition was laid down, that self-igniting cartridges were ineligible for military or naval service. The prejudice against cartridges carrying their own means of ignition was founded on the fact that, if a box or packet of them were shattered by a cannon-ball, or struck with an ordinary small-arm ball, the entire lot would explode. This much is conceded; but the advantages which accrue from doing away with the need of capping—always inconvenient, and in cold weather well-nigh impossible—have come to outweigh the counterbalance of danger which self-igniting cartridges necessarily involve. The Mont Storm gun is a good weapon, under the limitations which the use of caps and ordinary cartridges presuppose. It has, further, the collateral merit of ability to use loose powder, if preferred; capability, too, of loading by the muzzle, supposing the breech-gear to have got out of order.

Coming to this country, Snider brought with him some rough specimens of this weapon, made out of United States' rifles transformed. United States' firearms of the line do not sufficiently differ from our own national Enfields to impose the necessity of any special description. Snider came to England in company with Mr. Kerr, of the Worcester porcelain works—a gentleman who had also some interest in the Mont Storm gun. Mr. Kerr had access to the Dean of Worcester, who, happening to be on terms of correspondence with General Peel, an introduction to the latter was obtained through that clerical channel. Hence, curiously enough, Snider may be said to have approached the British War Office through the British Church. At the War Office the

Mont Storm gun, thus heralded, was much admired. Snider's diary (hereafter to be made public, so far as can with propriety be done) records the particulars of many a conversation respecting it between him and General Peel, General Williams (of Kars), the Duke of Cambridge, General Hay, Sir William Armstrong, and the Prince Consort, whose opinion of its merits was fervent and undisguised. The Duke of Cambridge procured access to the late lamented Prince Consort for Snider. The Prince kept him in conversation about the gun for nearly an hour, and subsequently requested, in a letter to the War Office, that it might undergo trial forthwith. "It is out and out the best military breech-loader I have ever seen," wrote the Prince to General Peel. It is of interest now, after the seven days' campaign and Sadowa, to be aware of the fact that Prince Albert deprecated the Prussian Zündnadelgewehr. It carries a self-igniting cartridge, as we know. The Mont Storm gun does not. The Zündnadelgewehr violates a certain canon of military teaching, as then laid down; yet the Prussians knew what they were about.

For a time affairs appeared to dispose themselves prosperously on behalf of the Mont Storm gun. At one period it seemed likely to become the accepted breech-loader of the British service. Yet even during this favourable period, Snider's diary enlightens us to the troubles he had to encounter, the straits to which he was often put whilst superintending the conversion to the Mont Storm system of certain Enfield muskets consigned to him for the purpose. Stranger as he was to London, he had to find out the proper workmen for doing what he wanted. His finances were scanty. I find a sorry record of letters waiting to be posted for want of the penny stamp; of long walks when he should have driven; of meagre dinners, or no dinners at all. These and other hardships, to a man some fifty years of age, accustomed to luxuries, by taste an epicure, and, as I imagine from his recorded symptoms, afflicted with heart-disease, were not trifling. He frequently records spitting of blood, short coughs, and other indications of heart-malady. The circumstance may as well be recorded here, that, although I was the first person to whom Snider wrote when he landed in England, the last to whom a letter from his hand was penned; though we came to be on terms of affectionate intimacy, yet I never stood to him in the relation of physician to patient. He was a homœopath, and most enthusiastic: of course, there could be no community of medical feeling between us. On many an occasion in times past he had told me he would rather die than be bled. When apoplexy struck him down on the 9th of July, he was not bled. When the stroke fell again, October 25th, he died.

Resuming the narrative, it was during Snider's operations with the Mont Storm gun, at the request of British war authorities (as the writer has ample documents to prove), that the memorable ten pounds of powder was supplied to him from Woolwich; on behalf of which

official lawyers' letters were sent, pressing for payment of 17. 1s. 2d., and relative to which, as he wrote to me shortly before his death, and told me not thirteen hours before that event, he was sued. Inasmuch as this suing is denied by Mr. Clode, the War Office solicitor, it becomes of some importance to be precise as to the grounds of counter-allegation. I do not find amongst Snider's documents any actual writ or other process-paper; but I find lawyers' letters in abundance. I moreover find evidence of a claim more mean and contemptible still, namely, one for wooden plugs of Enfield bullets,—less than three shillings.

In the early part of the year 1859, Snider went to Paris for the purpose of introducing the Mont Storm gun to the French war authorities. In doing this he committed no breach of faith with the British Government. The point has to be remembered, that at the time in question Sir William Armstrong had not moved to promote abolition of patent laws. The Act of Parliament abrogating inventors' rights as against the Government had not been passed. The celebrated cause of Feather *versus* The Queen yet belonged to the future. Snider could treat with the British Government or not treat, as best might suit his interests. He elected not to treat with the Government farther than to elicit their acquiescence in the system. This achieved, his programme was to make over his patent rights in the Mont Storm gun to a member of the British gun trade.

Snider had an intimate acquaintance with French: he spoke and wrote it perfectly. He had often been to France; therefore he was as well competent to forward his interests there as in England, other circumstances being equal. He took with him to Paris a letter of introduction to the Princess Murat. From that distinguished lady to the Prince the transference was easy; and Murat had imperial audience whenever he pleased. Snider's diary conveys much of interest as to the considerate, even friendly way in which his introduction was responded to by the Prince, who secures the entry through the *douane* of Snider's experimental weapons; drives Snider about; takes him home, and manifests towards him the most considerate hospitality. Finally, the Prince announces to Snider the pleasing intelligence that the Emperor had requested him (the prince) to bring Snider into the imperial presence at any hour, if the gun really were of sufficient merit. Then comes a turning-point in the French history of the Mont Storm gun. Prince Murat suggests that the Emperor's armourer, M. Gastenne Renette, should see the arm, and criticise it. Snider consents: experiments are made. The gun is fired, and, owing to some cause not necessary here to investigate, the result is not satisfactory. Doubtless the issue is made known to the Emperor; for, do what Snider will, he cannot gain the access that once seemed inevitable. Once he is very near succeeding. He manages, by some means, to penetrate even to the Emperor's antechamber. There he has conversation with General Fleury, who, after some polite generalisations, told Snider that the

Emperor at that time was positively inaccessible. "Then," my friend's diary goes on to explain, "the general seemed as though he had suddenly forgotten an appointment. Hurriedly laying hold of a bundle of papers, he said I must excuse him, and, passing into the imperial chamber, left me alone with my guns on the table and my gun-cases on the floor."

A circumstance has now to be recorded that may have given Snider his first crude idea of the celebrated gun now adopted for British infantry service, and associated with his name. His interview with the Emperor's armourer, M. Gastenne Renette, has been noticed. On that occasion that celebrated gunmaker showed to Snider a certain breech-loading carbine of the Emperor's own device, and with which the cent-gardes are equipped. To convey a general notion of that arm a Lefauchaux breech-loading shot-gun has to be imagined. The cent-garde carbine barrel bends down at an angle from the stock in a similar manner, and is loaded similarly. The cartridge, however, is not a Lefauchaux pin-cartridge, but one on the central-fire principle, functionally identical with the one associated with the Snider arm. The cartridge of the cent-garde carbine is exploded by a half-frictional, half-impact stroke of the hammer itself, after a manner that would need a diagram to make it fully comprehensible. What only concerns present purposes is to announce that the cent-garde carbine was the first military weapon ever associated with the use of a central-fire cartridge ignited at the base; and the presumption may reasonably be that Snider derived his first ideas of the central-fire system from this French cent-garde carbine. To any reader at all conversant with the specialties of military small-arms the circumstance need not be stated, that with the similarity of cartridge the comparison between the two systems ends.

Snider was busily engaged during the whole period of his sojourn in Europe on other affairs than guns. Dye-stuffs, looms, carriage-wheels, coal-contracts, schemes for the introduction of ornamental woods, brewing, ship-sheathing,—all those projects helped to consume his time and absorb his monetary resources. His financial credit, for one in his position, was good, as transactions with the houses of Mr. Henry Peabody and others testify. He must have been an excellent financier; an extraordinary faculty to be associated with so great an inventive talent. Although large sums of money passed through his hands during his seven years and a half sojourn in Europe, and though by temperament luxuriously disposed, Snider lived on an economical, nay penurious, average. In justice to one who has been represented as having deserted his family, I am able to record the pleasing fact that he sent to his wife and children the major part of moneys raised. His diary entries of these American despatches are most precise, and the details recorded are often touching. His sons, though all grown up to man's estate, are the objects of a solicitude foreign to our conception of American

precocity of boys, and expressive of the man for kindness. Occasionally he will not trust his sons as to their own choice of clothes, but he sends them clothes; and once I find him giving specific directions how a certain Inverness cape is to be lined, so as to be more adapted to the rigour of the North-American climate. It is very touching to see that Snider, often having perhaps raised two or three hundred pounds one day, what with patent expenses, clearances of outstanding debts, and remittances home, leaves himself after three or four days so destitute that he is pressed for the means of a dinner, a cab-hire, or sometimes a penny stamp!

His energy was indomitable, his penetration most acute. Intuitively he seemed to grasp a principle, and see its bearings and applications. These faculties are well exemplified by the history, from inception to completion, of his now celebrated central-fire gun. His clear perception gave him a glimpse of the inevitable, when others called it the impossible. Often do I remember saying to him, "You waste your time; our war authorities will never adopt a system using a self-igniting cartridge." "They *must* adopt it sooner or later," Snider would retort with peculiar energy; "they must come to it at last. *Yes, sir!*" They did come to it, as we are now aware; but how the once Philadelphia wine-merchant could have so distinctly wrought out that conclusion to his mind—how he found courage to act upon that conviction through years of illness, suffering, pecuniary straits, imprisonment for debt, and other troubles—is a mystery to me, a monition to the weak-hearted and weak of faith. Contemporaneously with his labours on breech-loading small-arms, Snider gave attention to artillery systems. He wrote and published a pamphlet, the existence of which I knew not at the time, but which I find amongst his loose papers, on a proposed method for utilising cast-iron ordnance and adapting them to the rifled system by an ingenious process antipodally the reverse of what had hitherto, or has subsequently, been done. Whereas other schemes to this end have contemplated leaving the bore its original size plus the rifling, and strengthening the chase by hooping or jacketing outside, Snider proposed to contract the bore by the insertion of a cylinder. He suggested the accomplishment of this by the following means: the cannons were to be heated, whereby expansion should ensue; the internal cylinder was to be chilled by a freezing mixture, whereby it should undergo contraction. In its contracted state, it was to be slid into the chase, which, closing inward upon the cylinder, and the latter expanding outward upon the cylinder, a perfect fit would be accomplished. He then proposed to rifle this cylinder, after a system that might seem most expedient. The process was ingenious. It bespoke the mechanical ingenuity of Snider in this branch of technical art altogether new to him; but there is much reason to believe that the scheme, if carried into operation, would have failed to achieve the object desired.

Space admonishes me to deal briefly with the phases of invention through which his present celebrated converted small-arm passed before arriving at its final perfection. Only those who have been actively engaged in such matters can understand or appreciate the numerous troubles which he had to encounter. I remember meeting with Snider soon after the British war authorities had officially revoked their condemnation of self-igniting cartridges, and had gone to the extreme of advertising that this sort of ammunition was a *sine quâ non* of acceptability. Snider was triumphant. "They have given in at last," he exclaimed; "I told you they would." Thenceforward he felt himself secure in all that regarded competition with other converted breech-loaders on the self-igniting system. About this time it was that he communicated with me professionally; and as the issue affects the status of his memory before the Government and the public, I recognise the need of stating the necessary circumstances. He had known me to have been engaged in devising a certain system of cartridges; therefore he applied to me that I would make a suitable cartridge for his gun. I did my best, and failed; thereupon Snider was thrown upon his own resources. Having tried many things, he ultimately decided that a thin brass-plate cartridge, with paper or calico outside, would be best. He caused some to be made; but they were rough and clumsy. Colonel Boxer, the laboratory superintendent at Woolwich, having the machinery and resources of that vast establishment at his disposal, soon turned them out in their present perfection. These are the facts; and, being so, I am at a loss to understand how, on any sufficient ground, Colonel Boxer can lay claim to the cartridges as his. Nevertheless, when Snider was first stricken down with apoplexy, in the beginning of July last, the press teemed with paragraphs imputing the credit to Colonel Boxer. Snider was powerless to reply; the hand of death was upon him.

Snider's clear intellect remained unclouded to the very last; and this perhaps is to be regretted. It enabled him to give audiences on business, to realise the fear of sheriffs' officers on the watch. His right hand remained unparalysed; and Snider, being propped up, managed to the day before his death to write upon a small table with short legs, set upon his bed. The mental agony I have seen him undergo in those moments of excitement is now frightful to contemplate. The hot blood would rush to his face, and his eyes shed tears in torrents. What agitated him much was the prevalence of a belief that he was not ill at all—only hiding for safety, and the better to move the War Office. That belief never ought to have prevailed. Within a few days after Snider's first attack, I published the fact in the *Morning Post*, and communicated it to the *Times*. I fear in this particular Snider's medical attendant, Dr. Hahnemann, has much to answer for. On the day of the funeral, that gentleman told me he *did not* anticipate the fatal issue, and inquired of me whether such had

not been also my opinion. The question surprised me not a little. For my part, I not only believed that Snider would succumb, if measures of relief were not immediately adopted, but I attested that belief orally and in print so often, and in so many quarters, that particularisation would be unnecessary here. Deeply as this inventor execrated, and had cause to execrate, the government system of dealing by his invention, he went home and slept to death, impressed with the most kindly sentiments in respect to the sound-hearted British public. He might have lain and died, and the public not known of his illness, but for a taunting paragraph which appeared in the *Engineer* newspaper. That paragraph having been copied into the Money Article of the *Times*, coupled with a doubt—rather a denial—of its accuracy, a letter was sent to the *Times*, affirming all. It was not published in the *Times*, but appeared in the *Engineer*. It attested all the allegations; whereupon the leading journal acted strenuously enough. Unfortunately, however—and for what reason I cannot even guess—when one of our highest civil-engineering firms sent its principal to Snider's bedside; when that principal attested, in a letter to the newspapers, that Snider's case had been under-coloured, not over-coloured, and, on medical authority, that his case would be fatal if the patient were not speedily relieved from his immediate anxieties; when that letter was sent to the daily papers, coupled with the intimation that the London and Westminster Bank would receive contributions from the civil-engineering corps, so as to make up a minimum *douceur* of 4000*l.*—*that letter was not inserted.* This was on the Tuesday. On the Thursday Snider died.

I saw him the evening preceding his death. He was flushed and excited. He had been studying some worrying documents that had just come in. He had also received a hint about sheriffs' officers on the watch. I tried to keep up his spirits, but he would not be comforted. What shocked him most was the discovery that a great country like England had contracted a debt of honour and left it unrequited. From the first he had most exaggerated notions of reliance on what he called "the chivalry of England." Far from regretting the issue of the cause, *Feather v. The Queen*, he gloried in it. "Now we shall be on honour," he would say to me; "gentlemen with gentlemen." No one did I ever meet with so deeply impressed as he with the maxim, *Noblesse oblige*. Republican as he was, no garter king-at-arms could have greater faith in the honour of our monarchy to inventors than he. Snider was undeceived at last. A few days before his death he drew my attention to an illustration of our social system—one that had escaped from my memory.

"Ah," said he, "now I realise what you told me when I came from the Worcester pottery works. You said that people here were either china or crockery. I am crockery—of the yellow clay!" exclaimed poor Snider; "nobody—mere adventurer; the pledged honour of

England takes no heed of me." Then, bursting into fury, and raising his yet unparalysed hand, "D—n the china war people; the —— mean beggars!" he muttered through set teeth. "Let me write my book—*my book*. I will shame them into their shoes, the mean beggars!"

That book he was never destined to write.

His own opinions as to probable recovery varied from time to time. "Now," he would exclaim, "I shall soon be under the accursed British sod." Now he would talk of futurity—what he meant to do as to guns; what afterwards. On the very Monday preceding his decease he wrote me a letter—partly to expedite my movements, if possible, in pressing forward the engineers' subscription of 4000*l.*; partly to inquire whether I would accompany him to Germany; partly—it grieves me to write it—to state that intelligence had been brought him of officers on the watch. At Wiesbaden he expected the King of Prussia and General Moltke to meet him relative to the adoption of his gun. To illustrate the indomitable energy of the man, he had actually commenced learning German—of which he knew nothing—the Sunday evening preceding his death.

Hope against hope as one may, yet the fact is not altered that the first apoplectic attack is the herald of death, to strike suddenly at any time. It is as the acceptance of a bill payable at sight. From my medical point of view I could only anticipate the issue as it came about. At times I would try to lead Snider up to the contemplation of death resignedly. "It is a development, as birth is a development," I would say; "a natural change, as the falling of the leaf. God grant that I may die as tenderly watched by and heeded for as you!" I would say. "Does not curiosity sometimes prompt you to anticipate the mystery of death? Look at those stars; would you not like to roam amidst them? Can you not trust in the love and justice of God? Do you not believe in future personal identity? Do you not long to be with those you have loved—with them where soul is to soul transparent—making known you loved them?"

"By and by, by and by," he would say. "Guess I know what this world *is* like; *yes, sir*. Don't the next—nobody ever came back to tell me; *no, sir*. My end is not come yet. I shall do something yet to guns." His eyes closed, and he fell musing. "Not yet," he rejoined, brightening up; "a fortune-teller told me so. Here, come close!"

We were alone; yet he gazed about as if afraid or ashamed that somebody should hear us.

"An old woman told me my fortune once, and every thing has come about that she told me. I was to fail in business; to come to Europe; to be engaged in warlike matters; to be struck down; recover, and live to do something great."

"And what will you do, Snider?"

"Do! First find out what is to *be* done; find what the world *wants next*. The world *did* want breech-loading rifles. I have done

it. Now I'll do what the world wants next. Die ! not yet. I'll go to America, and build three houses in the mountains ; one for you, one for Clark, and one for me. We'll shoot bears together."

Yet, as dreary days and nights wore on, the shadow of death must have dimmed, I fancy, the sunshine of those earthly prospects. Latterly he would cause chapters of the Bible to be read to him for hours together ; and often he would bitterly exclaim, "After all, I go to rest under the accursed British sod !"

At his last moments I was not present ; but they have been described to me. Suddenly his right hand was seen to point to his tongue. He could not speak ; that tongue was paralysed. "Then," said his friend, Mr. Clark, "he raised his eyes upwards for a moment with the most imploring gaze I ever saw." It might have seemed as though the spirit of love and tenderness that moved him, making him lovable and beloved, was gazing upwards to the fountain-source from which it had outsprung, vouchsafed to actuate in life the yellow clay of that piece of common crockery God-fashioned—Jacob Snider junior.

To many minds the question will now dawn, why it should have been, how it should have happened, that the Government should have so completely deserted in his need an inventor who had behaved so honourably, and in behalf of whom the public feeling was so strong? That question suggests another, viz. who and what is the Government in such a matter? Of English heads of departments I have heard poor Snider speak in the most eulogistic terms. To the last he was impressed with the belief that all would be settled to his liking, if he could only get on his legs and speak to the Duke of Cambridge and General Peel.

Perhaps I may be induced to write a pendant to this article, if the public do not object ; meantime the War Office will do well to clear itself from a statement recently made, that a system there prevails of giving to solicitors' clerks, &c. a commission on differences effected between claims of inventors and the bounties actually paid.

J. SCOFFERN, M.B. LOND.

FAUST—DRAMATIC AND LEGENDARY

FAUST is at present the most conspicuous object in the London theatrical world; the renewed vitality which he received from the music of M. Gounod at the Opera-house being now continued at the theatre; and it is highly creditable to Mr. Chatterton, the lessee of Drury Lane, that he gratifies the public taste for "spectacular" display in an intellectual way; allows people to think they are filling up their time with literary occupation, even when they are really attracted by decoration only. It is beyond doubt that the success of *Manfred* three years since may be attributed to three causes—the scenery, the reverence for Byron, and the popularity of Mr. Phelps.

Faust, as written by Goethe, is even less dramatic than *Manfred*; but it is sure to please if presented in an attractive form. Every body, of nearly every rank, is familiar with the principal figures; and if the scenes in which they appear hang somewhat loosely together, the gaps are readily filled up by the imagination of the spectator. Mr. Bayle Bernard, who has very cleverly reduced the long poem to theatrical shape at Drury Lane, has, with strange delicacy, abolished the seduction of Margaret, and devised a charge of matricide as the cause of her imprisonment. But he really neither gains nor loses by the change. Modify the dialogue as you will, Margaret remains guilty of infanticide in the mind of every one that ever heard of her; and no one will ever take the garden-scene for a mere chaste flirtation. To the end of time the outline of Goethe's *Faust* will remain unalterable; and we may rest assured that no other *Faust* will take its place. Whence the devil-raising doctor came, people do not exactly know. Some suppose that he was a Pole, and rejoiced in the name of Twardowski; and a very stupid theory identifies him with Fust the printer. In the olden days he was not complete without the Greek Helen for a paramour; and it is this classical *liaison* that gives occasion to one of the finest speeches in Marlowe's tragedy. Margaret is entirely the invention of Goethe; her introduction is an innovation upon the ancient legend; but Faust has now taken her for better for worse, and must hold her for centuries, while from Helen he is eternally divorced. We all know, indeed, that the Grecian dame receives due acknowledgment in the second part of *Faust*; but the name of the readers of the second part of *Faust* is certainly *not* legion. If we are ignorant whence the doctor came, at any rate we are pretty clear as to the point at which he has arrived.

For several years we have been contented to consider Faust simply in his relation to Margaret. The *Faust and Marguerite* which—thanks to the beautiful decoration and the acting of Mr. Charles Kean—made *such a figure* at the Princess's, merely embodied the indispensable

woman ; and when M. Gounod's opera was produced in London, the Walpurgis night was omitted, as indeed it was by the German company who played an abridgment of Goethe's work at the St. James's Theatre several years ago. What we hear at Drury Lane is the Margaret story *plus* the Walpurgis night, superbly put on the stage by Mr. W. Beverley; and quite enough too for a theatrical audience. If there are any persons who complain that they do not see genuine Goethe on the stage, they know nothing either of the stage or Goethe. The Drury-Lane *Faust* is incomparably the nearest approach to the original that has been seen yet; nor is a much closer approximation even possible. The very metre of the German work would be unappreciable in an English theatre.

The permanence of Faust as a legendary figure before he acquired a new fixity at the hands of Goethe may be attributed to the fact that he became the typical embodiment of all those stories in which the magician is represented as making a formal compact with the Evil Principle. The oldest legend in which this relation between the natural and supernatural is exhibited is the tale of the monk Theophilus, which comes to a happy end; the erring man being released from his bargain through the interference of the Holy Virgin. But Theophilus, like the Pole Twardowski, is known only to antiquaries; and most other prototypes of Faust have merely a local celebrity. Among these are the architect of Cologne cathedral and the mob of devil-cheaters, who contrive to evade the due performance of their obligations. Of these the Scotch gentleman who agreed that he would belong to the Evil One as soon as a certain house should be completed, and then omitted to lay the last tile of the roof, was a notable specimen. As far as I can penetrate the fog that surrounds the history of the Lady Hatton, who has the honour of conferring upon London one of its very few ghost-stories, she was the victim of a regular compact, made according to the orthodox Faust fashion. Originally a milkmaid, she wished to be one of the quality; and the devil making his appearance, promised to grant her request if she agreed to become his property after a certain term of years. The contract being duly signed, Sir Somebody Hatton married the milkmaid; but the devil does not seem to have set much value on his purchase; for when the term had expired, he flung the lady from the top window of the house in Hatton-garden, and dashed out her brains. But this story has never, to my knowledge, been reduced to a coherent, satisfactory shape; and when one hears it, one can only say, "Well, after all, Lady Hatton seems to have been a sort of female Faust."

Quite apart from the so-called dealers with the devil is the other class of victims to Satan, of which Don Juan is the accepted type. Here there is no compact between the sinner and the Evil One; but the latter appears as the agent of retributive justice, charged with the punishment of moral delinquency and impiety. A large number of stories, less tremendous in their catastrophe than that of the Spanish libertine, may be brought under the same head; and there are few

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Quite apart from the so-called dealers with the devil, is the class of victims to which Don Juan is the accepted type between the sinner and the Evil One, out of retributive justice, married with the key and impety. A large number of catastrophes than that of the *Sigismund* under the same head ; and there are also

persons who have not been frightened in their youth by some puritanical tale, in which the appearance, at any rate, of Satan or one of his representatives was mentioned as the result of those practices held by the Puritans in the greatest abhorrence. The story of the real devil who intruded himself upon the stage in lieu of a sham one, and frightened Edward Alleyne the actor out of his profession and into the notion of founding Dulwich College, was long held in esteem by a party who regarded stage-plays and stage-players with abhorrence. And who has not heard of those three wicked gamblers, who, while playing a rubber at whist (with a dummy) on Sunday, were joined by a fourth, who obligingly took the vacant place, and was observed by one of the party to have a cloven hoof in lieu of a human foot? These stories, by the way, are not necessarily puritanical. French Catholics believed that the devil interrupted the performance of an Italian opera played at Paris on a Sunday, under the superintendence of Cardinal Mazarin; and Spanish friars, when they recorded the legend of *Don Juan*, sometimes informed their hearers that, in addition to his other crimes, he was a Calvinist.

It is a curious fact that *Faust* and *Don Juan*, the two accepted types of diabolical agency, should have both settled down into puppet-shows long before they were respectively made classical by the great poet and the great musician of Germany. Goethe not only took his subject from one of these popular entertainments, but even had an eye to the puppet-show in the construction of his poem. In England a performance by marionettes has never become an institution with the multitude, as in Germany or Italy—seen in the very crude form of the itinerant Punches. And here, let it be observed, we have the Don-Juan legend reduced to its simplest elements, and afterwards modified by some daring atmosphere. Punch leads a life so profligate, that the devil, as in the case of the reckless Don, comes to remove him from the face of the earth. As to the English catastrophe, it has been commented upon by a German critic as one of the most impious doings ever contrived by man. "Observe," says he, "the devil does not appear as the tempter to evil, but as the instrument of the divine wrath; and in this capacity he is killed by Punch. Human law being destroyed in the person of the hangman, and divine retribution purchased by the destruction of the devil, it is clear" (so argues the critic) "that Punch is no longer under any power in this world or the next, but must henceforth be considered lord of the universe."

To such results do we aim when we explain things by an idea. Probably the first showman who contrived this hideous impiety simply thought that it was just as easy to make a white-faced puppet kill a black man as to perform the converse operation, and that there was no harm in giving a new end to an old tale.

JOHN OXENFORD.



UNIVERSITY UNION SOCIETIES

BOTH the occasion of Lord Houghton's recent visit to Cambridge, and the manifest satisfaction with which the excellent speech delivered by him at the opening of the new University Union Rooms was received, seem sufficient proofs that the apathy and indifference to the affairs of the external world with which the inhabitants of academic cloisters used to be charged have now become quite out of date. The intellectual tastes and sympathies of the young Oxonian or Cantab have grown infinitely more catholic and liberal in the course of the last few years. So far from the mental activities or interests of either being confined to one set of subjects, or running in one channel alone, they are scattered broadcast over an alarmingly varied range. The grateful student passes from abstract speculations of the subtlest kind to the concrete politics or to the social puzzles of the present day, with the same exquisite air of comfort and ease that he lays down a cricket-bat to handle a billiard-cue. He finds nothing too lofty, and nothing too low. Metaphysics, popular education, theology, political economy; every conceivable topic which can be furnished by the heavens above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth, finds in him an exuberantly confident champion, or a recklessly unscrupulous antagonist, as the case may be. His sympathies, and as a consequence his supposed knowledge, are co-extensive with the universe. It is true that the theatre of his actual experience has as yet been somewhat limited; but the stage of his imagination knows no bounds. A lofty disregard for facts, a marvellous facility for drawing sweeping inductions from one or two special instances,—all contribute to supply the defects that result from immaturity of knowledge and genius. "If," writes old Sir Thomas Overbury, "he hath read Tacitus, Guicciardini, and Gallo-Belgicus, he contemns the late lord-treasurer for all the state policy he had; and laughs to think what a fool he could make of Solomon, if he were now alive." But had Sir Thomas lived to witness the juvenile mental fermentation of the nineteenth century, or paid a visit to the rooms of the great debating societies of Oxford or Cambridge, he would have withdrawn this accusation with shame and confusion of face. If the undergraduate has read Tacitus, he is not, probably, acquainted with the works either of Guicciardini or Gallo-Belgicus, but, in their stead, with a very fair amount of general literature. In the latter part of the old knight's saying there is very likely a good deal more that is as true at the present day as at the time when it was first uttered. The peculiar style of oratory heard within the Union walls is something of the same kind as that which was almost exclusively practised by the youth of

Rome—the oratory of attack rather than of defence. Nor is it unnatural that this should be so. It is infinitely more pleasant, and easier into the bargain, to give vent to passionate invectives than to vindicate a policy or defend a government. Besides this, it is the not altogether ungenerous characteristic of young men to have a firm and settled conviction that the world is out of joint, and that the views which he—the particular orator in question—may happen to advocate contain the one needful remedy. It is in this spirit that administrations are annihilated, policies condemned, governments censured, and the state of society in general denounced with a lofty sneer.

But this passion for impeachment is displayed to less advantage when it is exercised upon subjects whose interest is still more or less remote than when it discharges its fury upon various shortcomings which fall within the actual every-day experience of the youthful orator. There is a certain amount of satisfaction, of course, in soundly abusing any thing or any body; but it becomes vastly increased when the thing or person affects our more immediate interests or comforts. For this reason, matters relating to the internal management of the institution to which he belongs are the most congenial themes that the Union orator can have. It is all very well to pass a vote of want of confidence upon the existing government; but it is a great deal better to be able to impeach the librarian or the treasurer, on the ground of there not being enough newspapers in the reading-room, or towels in the lavatory. Personality is the seasoning of a debate; and it is very gratifying to thunder forth charges, or to hiss forth hints in a significant tone, with a supercilious expression of contempt upon one's lip, which can make the president visibly wince and move uneasily in his chair. It is far better thus to accuse the committee of gross and scandalous neglect in not providing coffee for honourable members than to pass an elaborate censure on the ministry for having introduced, or for not having introduced, a Reform Bill. These are the debates which are really popular, and well and spiritedly conducted, at the Oxford and Cambridge Unions. The nights on which private business is to be discussed always bring a larger attendance to the debating-rooms than any others; the speakers are more various, and there is plenty of opportunity for the *carte* and *tierce*—the parry and thrust—of rhetoric, which are most interesting alike to disputants and audience. Every undergraduate feels that there is something which directly concerns him in the momentous event of a discussion as to the advisability of admitting the profanity of tobacco-smoke into the sacred precincts of the Union Club; but if the truth was told, few in reality care one pin whether the franchise is fixed at ten pounds or five.

The political debates of undergraduates are, in truth, seldom otherwise than dreary. It is not to be expected that they should produce many original arguments; and they have to choose between *réchauffés* of newspaper articles or laborious compilations from standard political

works. Thus there are practically two classes of Union speakers on these weightier themes,—those who, straining at liveliness and force, look for inspiration to the various daily and weekly prints; and those who, preferring solidity to show, spend whole mornings in gleaning generalisations and axioms from portentously substantial tomes. Let the reader suppose he is seated in a long and lofty room, down the sides of which run seats covered with dark-green leather. In the middle is a vacant space; and at the top, on an elevated platform, stands a broad oak-table, behind which is the seat of dignity occupied by the president, who is arrayed in the full glories of evening dress. The time is nine o'clock, and a steady stream of undergraduates flows into the room. Occasionally some unhappy wight will enter without the preliminary ceremony of taking off his hat or cap,—a proceeding which elicits noisy sentiments of disapprobation from the assembled senate; for young Oxford and Cambridge alike are punctilious worshippers of etiquette. There is a gallery too, in which apparitions of muslins and silks may occasionally be observed. The debate has just commenced, and is on a strictly political theme—such, perhaps, as a motion of the kind made not three weeks ago, to the effect “that Mr. Bright is a disgrace to the country which produced him;” for superlatives and extremes are the main features of Union debates. Brown, who is at present addressing the House, belongs to the school of the light dashing orators; he has wanted “to have a shot” at the Tories or the Radicals, as the case may be. Glibly he runs on from sentence to sentence, and from charge to charge. There is a lack of argument in his remarks; and at times he lapses into a nebulous vagueness, that provokes cries of “Explain,” “Try back,” or even remarks more expressive and less complimentary. But Brown is by no means deficient in self-confidence, and has a copious vocabulary at his command. There are a great many words, and a great many very long ones, in the course of his speech; and he finally sits down, after a peroration of an alarming and convincing character, with the air of a man who has done his duty to himself and his country. A little applause follows, and Thompson, of Magdalen, rises up to reply. But now a murmur of evident dissatisfaction pervades the assembled undergraduates; for Thompson is a well-known bore. Thompson, however, is not in any way taken aback by the unflattering reception accorded him; and forthwith, in a doleful and monotonous strain, begins to pour forth the various items of theory and fact with which a casual study of certain great political authorities has made him superficially acquainted. “I believe, sir,—but as I have had no opportunity of consulting his works lately, I am unable to vouch for the accuracy of my statement—that Machiavelli has declared—” but Thompson is interrupted by exclamations of “O, O!” clearly betraying a suspicion that this comparative ignorance of his authority is nothing more nor less than affectation, as is indeed the case; for was not Thompson puzzling the whole of that morning over a chapter of an

English translation of Machiavelli; and was he not taking secret peeps at his manuscript notes within a few minutes of his rising up to speak? Young Oxford is intolerant of any thing like insincerity or sham; nor does it take pains to conceal the fact.

But, as has been said, the oratorical powers of the undergraduates are by no means displayed to the best advantage in a debate on matters purely political. It imports little how insignificant may appear the themes chosen. Fun can be made out of any thing. Whether the charge be that the pens in the writing-room are bad, or that honourable members have an objectionable trick of bringing their dogs into the library, or that there is never any hot water turned on in the lavatory, the debating is carried on with an equal amount of vigour and spirit. This is the sort of thing into which young Oxford or Cambridge throws his whole earnestness and power: he can be pathetic or amusing over the shortcomings of the treasurer or the peccadilloes of the committee. It is wonderful how serious an aspect the smallest errors, if properly viewed, can assume; how grave a breach of the constitutional liberty of the society has in reality been committed, if the president makes an attempt to check a debate on a certain theme, as trenching on dangerous ground; and how an effort on the part of the librarian to suppress any volume which he does not think it advisable that the Union should possess rises to the dimensions of a designing plot to undermine the privileges of honourable members. The eloquence of the undergraduate resembles the trunk of the elephant, which is able to pick up a pin with the same consummate ease that it can tear up a tree by its roots. Undergraduates are acute and merciless critics; and as a rule they have a constant supply of very superior "chaff" ready at hand. The truth of Mr. Gladstone's remark—to the effect that there was no better preparation for the House of Commons than the Oxford Union—is, then, perfectly true. The same qualities that enable an undergraduate humorously to accuse the committee of neglect in not attending to the wants of honourable members will also, if properly cultivated, enable him to develop into an able and attractive parliamentary debater. Of course it would be absurd to recommend young men to confine themselves to talking on such themes only as they thoroughly understand. The crudest discussion that they can hold cannot but have a beneficial tendency. If it does nothing else, it may teach them their own ignorance, and act as a guide-post for further reading and inquiry, to say nothing of the advantage that must result from a comparison even of the roughest and most incomplete mental notes. In addition to all this, there is nothing which can better teach the aspirant to oratorical fame what his powers really are than the habit of speaking in public, or which can give him a better opportunity of measuring his own capacities for the task against those of his fellows.

Theological subjects, or indeed any topics which may possibly give rise to religious controversy, are zealously forbidden at these discussions.

But to prevent the ardent undergraduate from making stray allusions to the theological polemics of the day would be quite out of the question. Every age has its own particular cant; and the cant at present prevalent at Oxford may be called the intellectual. We live in stirring times; a spirit of inquiry is afloat; old creeds are fast tottering to their fall; and young Oxford is beset by "honest doubts." When there is so much sceptical criticism going on on every side, it would obviously be the sign of a servile and unenterprising spirit to take any thing whatever upon trust; and if one finds that conscientious scruples are thrust upon one, why should not all the world know it too? Besides this, there is something very delightful in dealing sly cuts at orthodoxy, inspiration, and a thousand other things, when one's tutor may be standing close beside one, and dare not remonstrate even with a word. Thus we get a third division of the Union orator—the youth who seeks notoriety by eccentricity; who prefers being a kind of satirical comet to a steadily burning light—very brilliant, but very irregular. Under certain circumstances it is considered more satisfactory to juvenile ambition to be pointed at as entertaining strange views, or being a creature of dark imaginings and gloomy doubts as to the plenary inspiration of the Bible, than to be held up for universal admiration and imitation as an excellent young man. It is true that great caution must be exercised by the impassioned opponent of Church and State in his Union harangues; if he speaks out too roundly, the president will not improbably be unconstitutional enough to interfere with his liberty of speech, and ignominiously call him to order. But a great deal can be done by a judicious system of implication; and hints and allusions properly thrown out can convey an alarming idea of suppressed mental perturbation and disbelief.

As may be supposed, the orthodox university political creed is at present a kind of refined and kid-gloved radicalism. It is the fashion to be of a destructive rather than a constructive turn, to praise judicious and thoughtful criticism above blind and intuitive belief; not that conservatism has not its representatives among undergraduates—at heart all most probably would be conservative; for university life tends above every thing else to foster a profound contempt for the divinity of Mr. Bright, and indeed, generally speaking, for all who have not had the advantage of an Oxford or a Cambridge career. Besides this, the course of reading through which the young student has to pass inclines him rather to entertain radical than conservative theories; while the instinct probably of all young men is to side with those views that seem the more daring, and consequently the more attractive. That much good is done at Oxford by the discussion of political problems it is impossible to doubt; but it is from those discussions by a few select friends, and by the various papers which are read at essay societies and the like, rather than from the windy declamations held at the Union Club itself.

With a not altogether insignificant section of undergraduates the Union is the centre of interest in the University. They never miss a debate, and seldom attend one without managing to edge-in a few remarks in some manner or other. To be, at some period before they leave, the president of the society is the highest object of their academic ambition. The Union, its debates, and its debaters form the constant theme of their conversation; So-and-so is described as being a good, bad, or indifferent speaker, or else as never speaking at all. There is an air which these young gentlemen affect in their ordinary conversation clearly proclaiming them as Union orators—a scrupulous regard to attitudes, and a studied modulation of tone. Their whole time is virtually a preparation for their forensic efforts; they are perpetually meditating introductions, perorations, or possible subjects for discussions. When alone in their own rooms, they are in the habit of gesticulating wildly, of addressing passionate appeals to sofas and tables, and of thundering forth furious denunciations against chairs and book-cases. In conversation they remember that the true orator should never forget himself; and in moments of intercourse with their most familiar friends they wonder what was the style of Cicero's intimate and unpublished discourses with Atticus. As a matter of course, they are diligent students of newspapers, and curious collectors of any stray stories or recorded incidents which may serve as illustrations or embellishments of their arguments. They regard themselves as belonging to the greatest University in the world; of which the most important place is the Union Club.

When Lord Houghton, in his speech at Cambridge, remarked that the great advantage of such societies as these was, that they developed the powers of accurate and ready speech, he was very right, in the way which has been before pointed out; but we question whether, to use the words of Lord Powis, they are not almost more valuable "as furnishing a common point of interest and attraction to the members of the various colleges." Setting aside the fact that they are rich in a carefully selected library, and in reading-rooms furnished with the periodical literature of the day, it is a great thing for young men of all colleges to have some one place where they can not only meet each other, but exchange opinions and views. Union oratory, whether it be good or bad, can boast at least of this recommendation, that it gives young ambition an excellent opportunity of testing what qualifications it possesses for success.





C. J. Staniland del.

E. Evans sc.

THE DEATH WALK.

THE DEATH-WALK

THE lattice-window, diamond-paned,
Stood open as the twilight waned,
 And scattered lustre crimson-rayed
 Upon the cottage floor,
As, half his disk above the ground,
The angry, sinking sun around
 His shining lances played,
 In blood steeped o'er and o'er.

"He will not come, he will not come!"
 A plaintive whisper faltered out,
 As rose the shadows round about :
"The night is blind, the wind is dumb ;
 The dew will change to frosty rime—
 O, weary, weary, weary time !
He will not come, he will not come !"

The ruddy lustre of the sun
Grew copper-bronzed, then purple dun,
 And all the crush of piled-up cloud,
 Like scarcely molten ore,
Cooled quickly down from gray to swart,
While here and there a flickering dart,
 That almost seemed to hiss aloud,
 Lit up the glowing core.

O wistful eyes, O straining sight !
 There is no passing shadow falls
 Upon the distant, leafy walls,
Athwart the sinking purple light ;
 No youthful footfalls gaily pass
 From ringing road to silent grass,
And echo through the coming night.

"He will not come !" pale Lilly sighed,
 Say rather whispered hoarsely low,
 As in her hand she laid her brow.
O, better she aloud had cried,
 With flood of tears and throbbing breast,
 Than thus had watched the sun to rest,
And felt with light how hope outdied !

O, weary, weary, weary time !
The Summer's dew makes Winter's rime,

THE DEATH-WALK

The flush of hope brings chilling fears,
 And Joy is drowned in her own tears.
 The sun is gone, the fires died out
 Which warmed the heaped-up, cindery bank
 Of rugged clouds, piled rank on rank;
 And not a star all round about,
 Nor glimmer of the moon on high,
 Was seen in all the dreary sky.
 Perhaps the fever in the sight
 Of that lone watcher of the night
 Shone out into the sombre air;
 For surely there was life and light
 And ghostly, wandering figures there.
 Her soul looked forth into the gloom,
 And in a misty glimmer traced
 Now eyes, now lips, hands interlaced,
 A breezy down, a sheltered room,
 A waste with yellow heather broom;
 And every where with beauty graced
 A figure smiling, double-faced:—
 A singing brook came leaping down
 'Tween broken banks; the summer rain
 Had filled them to the very crown;
 Had changed the limpid drops to brown,
 The purling note to loud refrain.
 The low-arched bridge which spanned the stream
 Lay half beneath the brawling rush
 Of saucy waves, now low, now flush
 With either shore, and white as cream.
 A timid form—it was her own—
 Stood bending near the narrow ridge,
 Which now was all of that old bridge
 The water had not overflown;
 And as she quivered on the shore,
 A cheering voice spoke in her ear,
 A handsome form stood by her side,
 And in the tumult of her fear,
 With nervous arm and rapid stride,
 Her safely o'er the torrent bore.
 With drooping lids and heaving breast
 Her more than thanks her voice confessed,
 And love, full-armed in tender might,
 Flashed on the stranger's eager sight
 In quiv'ring lip and flushing cheek,—
 O, let thine eyes no further seek,

Pale watcher by the lattice-pane
 Since twilight trembled on the wane,
 To trace the downward path of flowers,
 Trode blissfully on summer eve
 With him the lord of Lyndon's towers,
 Till leaves and blossoms seemed to weave
 A deathless garland round thine head,
 As one to joy and honour led.

Fair path, which grew so wild and steep!
 Bright eve, which darkened into cloud!
 Till storm-drops round thee 'gan to weep,
 And sullen winds to wail aloud,
 And leaves and blossoms tempest-tossed,
 All withered as by sudden frost,
 Fell dead in whispering thy name—
 Thy name! So young, so weak,—lost, lost!
 O, lost to all but death and shame!

“He will not come!” with listless hand,
 And outward show of self-command,
 She closed the lattice, but a throb
 Of pain, that was not sigh nor sob,
 Clove through her heart and brain;
 She never bent beneath the throe,
 But slowly whispered hoarse and low,
 “‘He’ll never come again!’”

There was a merry rout on Lyndon Hill;
 The amber light
 Through all the mansion's many windows shone;
 On stately tree and garden's flowery zone,
 And with its fan-like rays
 Woke to a glow the swarthy cheek of night.
 And from its low-browed hall, of wont so still,
 The busy hum of many voices came;
 The chant of blithesome lays,
 Of boastful words the loud acclaim,
 All hailing one proud name;
 And made the air
 With joyous sound and radiance fair
 Exultant and aflame.
 Thus rang the words from voice to voice:
 “Fair Margaret, our Lyndon's choice!”
 There came an echo on the wind,
 A *glimmer on the midnight blind*,

THE DEATH-WALK

That murmured at the cottage-door,
 That lit the lattice-pane,
 To tell the news from Lyndon Hill,
 Of Lyndon's choice, of Lyndon's will,
 To Lilly watching, sick, heart-sore,
 Since twilight 'gan to wane.

She never moved, she never spoke,
 When on her ear the tidings broke,
 But with a strangely vivid glance,
 That flashed in one bright ray,
 Then settled in a deadly stare,
 She sat upon her lowly chair,
 And head unbent in rigid trance
 Of living death she lay.

O, weary, weary, weary time !
 The Summer's dew makes Winter's rime,
 The flush of hope brings chilling fears,
 And Joy is drowned in her own tears.

On Lyndon Hill the summer Eve
 Sat crowned with gold ; her fleecy robe
 Of white and rosy-tinted cloud
 But half concealed her azure sleeve,
 And girdle of the ruby proud ;
 And on her flushing cheek from each ear-lobe
 There hung a diamond star,
 That glittered wide and far.

And as the Eve, so was the Morning fair,
 As following Night, who stole betimes away,
 He came in vigour through the radiant air.
 Forth shone the lovely day,
 Not lovely only in its liquid light,
 And breezes leste, but in its flush of hope,
 Which all encompassed in its living scope,
 And made its very shadows bright.
 Love's jubilee it was, and so it shone,
 And made day's eyes as lovely as its own.

The bride of Lyndon met the dawn
 With eyes of light and cheek of rose,
 And heart that throbbed with joyous throes
 In greeting of the love-lit morn.
 But there was one with face forlorn,
 Whose cheek was as the falling snow
 Upon an icy stream below,

THE DEATH-WALK

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False Lyndon's love-bride all forsworn.
From her deep sunken eyes a fire
Streamed forth with sullen flame,
While firmly closed in anguished ire
And bitterness of shame
Were her thin lips, now white, now red,
As if from sudden wounds they bled.

Two brides—but one false groom !
Fair Margaret and Lilly fair ;
The one with living blossoms in her hair,
And brow of light and cheek of bloom ;
The other with a sallow skin
All blanched without and seared within.

For bridal both arrayed
In fleecy robes of chastest white,
A coronal of orange-blossoms made
Decked Margaret's braids of night ;
The virgin bridal-wreath
Which trembled with her breath :
In pallid Lilly's tresses brown
With silver leaves there gleamed a crown
Of roses blanch as death.

Fair bridesmaids deftly fitted round
The bride of hope with tender care,
And voices tuned unto the sound
Of fond solicitude were there ;
And treasures rare
Of gifts on every side were found.
But ah, alone, alone !

With frozen cheek, but burning brain,
Pale Lilly like a bleach white stone
Stood by the lattice-pane.

Alone, alone, alone !
The merry bells were ringing out,
With boastful clang and joyous tone
The joyful message round about ;
But every clear and tuneful note
Her weary heart in discord smote,
For on her lonely ear they fell
The boom of death's low solemn knell.

Then as the hour nearer sped
When Lyndon false his bride should wed,
She drew from out a sombre niche
A *flask* of sallow green,

THE DEATH-WALK

And drop by drop upon her lip
 She let the draught unhallowed drip ;
 'Twas full of gouts as black as pitch,
 With shining film between.

The poppy and the henbane juice
 Were there, and herbal poisons fell,
 To woe and shame of dreadful use,
 Whose hellish names I dare not tell.
 And as she drank the deadly brew,
 Her features sickened in the sight ;
 And not her robe of snowy hue,
 Nor wreath of roses pure and bright,
 As lip and cheek were half so white.

Then from her throbbing heart the rush
 Of blood came mantling to her face ;
 And o'er her neck and cheek the flush
 Of ruby life brought fire and grace.
 Light filled her eyes, and forth she shone
 With all the loveliness her own.
 And so in beauty heavenly fair,
 While not a cloud her face o'ercast,
 Into the sunny air she passed ;
 And at a tranquil pace,
 In bridal white and roses in her hair,
 Within her heart despair,
 And poison in her very breath,
 Went forth upon her walk of death.

Across the garden, with its flowery host
 Of bright-rayed petals, breathing odours sweet,
 And through the orchard where the branches meet
 Just overhead, all gnarled and weather-tossed ;
 Along the pleasant lane, where green
 The grass fringed all the way, and sunshine came
 The wild-flowered hedge and pollard trees between,
 Her snowy robe shone like a brighter flame.
 The birds, which once would flutter to her feet,
 Flew scared away, and e'en the household cur,
 Who brisk with joy would gambol up to her,
 Slunk whining back ; and some she chanced to meet
 Of humble villagers, who used to greet
 Her coming with a hand upraised,
 And hearty speech, in tribute to her worth,
 Beside the path stood silent and amazed,
 As if she were some spirit upon earth.

So passed she on in loveliness supreme
 And vestal white; now through the serring field,
 By nodding ranks of wheat-ears half revealed,
 Where trembling poppies shone with ruddy gleam,
 And blue-eyed corn-flowers watched her half concealed.
 There by the creaking gate, where lazy midge
 Hung floating in the air, or toilsome bee
 Swept buzzing by; then o'er the narrow bridge—
 The very key-stone of her memory!—
 Where once had rolled the waves so white and hoarse,
 Now gurgling gaily in their narrow course;
 And so, by bleach-white road and deep green-sward,
 She reached the border of the gray churchyard.

An instant by the open gate
 Her silent footstep paused to wait.
 Forth rang the merry marriage-peal
 Above the sacred roof,
 When mid the clang there smote her ear
 An echo rolling swiftly near,
 The echo of a carriage-wheel,
 And clamp of horses' hoof.

She glided with a spirit-tread
 Among the living, o'er the dead,
 Upon her face a hectic bloom,
 A glitter in her eye.
 Low whispers followed by her side
 Of breathless awe: "Is this the bride?"
 From clustered crowds on grass and tomb,
 Who watched her fitting by.

Mid champ of bit and klirr of steel,
 The jingling of the harness bright,
 And whirr of many a carriage-wheel,
 Fair Margaret, all love and light,
 By Lyndon's side in beauty trod
 The pathway to the house of God—
 O bridegroom false! bride fair and leal!

But as they neared the open door,
 There stood a phantom them before,
 A second bride, in like array,
 With lovely face unveiled,
 Which flushed and bright an instant shone,
 Then sickened to the hue of stone;
 A rigid form, which barred the way,
 As if 'twere armed and mailed.

THE DEATH-WALK

How quailed false Lyndon at her gaze,
With feeble knee and parching tongue,
And craven hands that clutched and clung
About his bride, dumb with amaze!
"What brings you here?" he whining said—
Her white face looked so like the dead,
Her deep eyes set in deadly glaze.

"I am your bride!" No other word
Between her parted lips was heard;
Then with a shiver and a moan,
And hands that to her bosom clang,
Upon the earth a white form rolled.
False bells! ye should a dirge have tolled,
That, echoing through wood and stone,
The bride-peal had outrang!

O bridal bells! O jangling chords!
O discord far too deep for words!
O wedding morn, with hope so rife,
You brought two brides, but not one wife!

WILLIAM DUTHIE

STAGE JEWELS

BY DUTTON COOK

I.

THE playbills affixed to the door-posts of the theatre in Lincoln's-inn-fields announced a performance of Mr. Crown's admired comedy of *Sir Courtly Nice, or It cannot be*; the character of Sir Courtly—"a fop over-curious in his diet and dress"—to be supported by Mr. Knevit; while the favourite actress Mrs. Askew was to appear as Leonora—"Lord Belguard's sister, in love with Farewel."

"I would it had been a tragedy, for thy sake, Sir Geoffrey," said one of two gentlemen—a town mouse and a country mouse—who had stood for some few minutes perusing the bill. "It would have afforded us rarer sport."

"Nay, friend," replied the other, "I care not what the players may call their play. Tragedy or comedy, 'tis all one to me. I cry with them or laugh with them, the rogues, just as they would have me. Yet, methinks, I'd rather be laughing than crying just now. One has not so much cause or reason for merriment in these days. There's nothing like the jesting and the funning, and the roaring merriment that used to be. Things are not as I can remember them. Times are changed, my friend; times are changed. I doubt these players are not the men they were; nor the women neither, for that matter."

"You wrong them, Sir Geoffrey; they are pretty players enough; of much the same pattern and flesh and blood, I fancy, as those who have gone before them. This Knevit, now, is accounted a fellow of parts and promise. He is not a Betterton, I grant you—"

"Nor a Mohun, nor a Hart, I warrant," interposed Sir Geoffrey; "*they* were players indeed. I remember them well, both of them; and, as a younger man, have seen them play times and oft."

"He is somewhat light in the graver parts of tragedy, it may be," pursued the other; "but increase of years will give him weight and dignity. He is but a young man; still he is the most affecting lover on the stage, and a most exquisite fine gentleman. Then he is of very elegant port and handsome person, with a voice of silver—a clear counter-tenor, with a melodious warbling throat and happy elocution. He has played havoc with the women's hearts, this Knevit. There are many tales told about him, Sir Geoffrey, that are common talk and town gossip; yet none the truer on that score, possibly."

"Well, well, let us see the dog. Do with me as thou wilt, Ned."

"He comes of a good stock, moreover. His grandfather fought and bled at Marston Moor, and was held high in honour by his master, the

Royal Martyr. Still, if you would rather that we went to Dorset Gardens—”

“No; we’ll see this Knevit, Ned. If his grandsire fought for the good cause, it is fit that we should clap hands for the grandson, let him play never so vilely. But, good lack, what times are these, Ned, when a gentleman of family consents to figure on a public stage!”

“We must take the times as we find them, Sir Geoffrey.”

“True, Ned, true. But we old fellows can’t help looking back at the past; we’ve but a brief span of life to look forward to, you see, Ned. You’ll be doing much the same at my age, though you’ve many a long year to jog through before you arrive at that. I pray they may be happy years to you, good friend. But you’ll count me a gloomy old put to be talking in this preacher fashion. We’ll to dinner at the Three Tuns, and crack a bottle of the best; nay, two bottles, if the drawer can give us a good account of his Burgundy.”

“And then, if your humour lasts, Sir Geoffrey, we’ll to the theatre, to see pretty Mrs. Askew and George Knevit.”

“Ay, lad, we’ll to the playhouse. Since this troublesome lawsuit of mine has brought me to London, and keeps me here, I must see what I may, and so have wherewithal to amuse them in relating my adventures when I’m safe back among my dear ones at the old house in Wiltshire again. My eldest wench, Mistress Deborah, charged me to keep my eyes open, and take note of the fashions and the new modes in London, and give a good account of the same to her when I got home again. She’ll tease me with question upon question as to this and that; she’s never tired of listening to news of the town. A shrewd, forward jade, tall of her hands; yet a winning and a good girl too, Ned, with her mother’s eyes and her mother’s smile, God bless her!”

The country mouse who thus delivered himself was one Sir Geoffrey Lyddal, a Wiltshire baronet, somewhat advanced in years, with whom visits to town were matters of rare occurrence, and who was in London now but for a few days by reason, as he had explained, of certain legal business that he had on hand. His companion, the town mouse, was Mr. Edward Hervey of the Middle Temple: a young gentleman who set up for being something of a wit,—not so much among wits, perhaps, as among Templars,—who claimed to be a critic of plays and players, books and poems; took his seat in the pit night after night with much regularity and gravity, as though he were in some sort a judge upon a bench, about to condemn or to acquit according as the merits or demerits of the case to be brought before him might seem to require; and who, moreover, was inclined to pride himself upon his acquaintance with the town and its doings, its tattle and scandals; being rather a spectator of than a sharer in its malefactions, however. Not that it would have been distasteful to Mr. Hervey to have imputed to him a knowledge of the current naughtiness of the times, derived as much from its inside as from its out, from personal experience as from disin-

terested contemplation. In Mr. Hervey's day vice was rather gentlemanly than not. And to be always looking on and never taking part in the proceedings of the world of *ton* and quality was to be something like a timid speculator, who incessantly studying and vexing himself concerning the doings in the money-market, yet abstains from risking an investment, however insignificant.

II.

Sir Geoffrey expressed his approval of the treatment he received from the host of the Three Tuns in Shandois-street. He pronounced the dinner admirable, the Burgundy excellent. He demanded a second bottle, and tendered his thanks to the landlord for his attention.

"Whom have you in the next room, drawer?" he inquired of the waiter. Sir Geoffrey's attention had more than once, during his meal, been arrested by the noise of loud talking and laughing and boisterous revelry proceeding from an adjoining chamber.

"In No. 7, Sir Geoffrey?" said the waiter. "The young Welsh baronet, Sir Owen Price, is entertaining a party of his friends."

"Ay, ay; Sir Owen Price," repeated Mr. Hervey, with a sagacious air.

"A noisy party," continued the waiter; "they'll be breaking heads anon, I fear. They've begun by breaking bottles. The house would be better without such customers; such a mad roystering set as they are! They scare away honest and peaceable folks with their oaths and their brawling and their drunkenness. They'll be doing grave mischief before long. Already they've a long account to pay for smashed glasses and shattered platters. But Sir Owen is a man of property; he must have his will, I suppose; and he pays his way. We can't show such a customer the door."

"He'll mend, man, he'll mend," said Sir Geoffrey charitably. "We must make allowance for the heat of young blood."—And then, the waiter having quitted the room, he demanded of his friend, "Do you know this Sir Owen, Ned?"

"Ay; I've heard tales of him, and seen him at the theatre," Mr. Hervey replied, rather evasively; and he lowered his voice mysteriously as he continued, "'Tis said of him that he is the lover of the Mrs. Askew whom we are to see to-night."

"The jade!" said Sir Geoffrey; "will nothing less than a baronet content her ladyship? But it has ever been the same with these player women. They are true daughters of Moab, as the Puritans often said of them."

"Nay, this Mrs. Askew has borne a good repute hitherto; and there is little known against her now for a certainty. She has even been scoffed at for her prudery; and while she has kindled many a flame, is said to have remained ice-cold herself. Such is her friends' account of her. Half the theatre have been her lovers; yet none could boast that he had been more favoured than *his fellows*. The story of Sir Owen's

success may not be true, but set afloat by some rejected suitor in revenge for his own disappointment."

"We'll hope so, Ned. The players have little character to spare. We will not rob this poor creature of hers until the case against her be fully proven. And now let us discharge the reckoning, and move on to the playhouse."

The party in No. 7 were also breaking up. Sir Owen Price was calling aloud for coaches or chairs for his friends. As Sir Geoffrey and Mr. Hervey descended the stairs, the Welsh baronet was heard talking angrily.

"If that scoundrel Knevit dares to stand between me and Mrs. Askew, let him look to it! I say, let him look to it! One way or another I'll be even with him, the dog, let who will try to hinder me."

"Well spoken, Owen," said one of his friends.

"Major Moxon's voice," Mr. Hervey whispered to his companion.

"Whom is he threatening?" asked Sir Geoffrey.

"Knevit the actor. He is Mrs. Askew's play-fellow, and is said, if any one has, to have won her love,—I know not with what truth. There has been much tattle on the subject. I will tell you more of it anon. There is a story thereabout that is worth relating."

"These players! O, these players!" murmured Sir Geoffrey.

They proceeded on foot to the theatre in Lincoln's-inn-fields, and took their seats quietly in the pit.

III.

"Will the King be here to-night, do you think, Ned?" asked Sir Geoffrey, glancing towards the boxes.

"The King! Of what are you thinking, Sir Geoffrey? He never sets foot in a theatre."

"I forgot, I forgot. Times are changed. Perhaps he does well to hide his grim nut-cracker face at Hampton and Kensington, and such outlandish places. The players must speak High Dutch for him to understand them. Our English tongue is thrown away upon him."

"Hush, hush, Sir Geoffrey," interposed Mr. Hervey, looking over his shoulder apprehensively.

"Nay, man, I care not who overhears me. I wish King William no harm. But I can't forget old times. I've seen in those boxes, when Sir William Davenant was manager, his most gracious Majesty King Charles the Second, with his Queen and the Duke and Duchess of York, attended by all the rank and beauty of England—it was a sight worth seeing—with my Lady Castlemaine and Mistress Eleanor Gwyn glaring at each other from different sides of the house, as though ready to pull caps or begin a scratching match at a short notice. Ah, Ned, those were times to live in!"

Mr. Hervey was possibly a little wearied by the frequency of his friend's references to the past.

"I would we were to have a tragedy in lieu of this comedy," he said again, as he studied his playbill.

"Let us be content, Ned," said Sir Geoffrey; "I warrant the rogues will do their best to please us."

"But the story I promised to tell had reference to the tragedy in which Knevit and Mrs. Askew last appeared. We might have had some repetition of the scene to-night."

"Give me the story, Ned. 'Twill pass the time till the music begins."

"You are aware, Sir Geoffrey, that the players who appear as lovers on the stage do not always bear themselves so tenderly towards each other behind the scenes?"

"Doubtless that is true, Ned."

"Well, last night was performed the late Mr. Otway's beautiful tragedy of *Venice Preserved*, than which, I think, a finer work does not exist in the drama of the country. Shakespeare has not its equal in pathetic beauty and elegance of diction; he is content with a vulgar delineation of the passions. Well, Knevit was the Jaffier; Mrs. Askew the Belvidera. But they played together less happily than usual. There seemed some want of agreement between them. The lady's warmth sprang rather from her anger than her love. She glared resentfully when she should have gazed tenderly; a baleful fury stood in her eyes when they should have been streaming with tears. And Jaffier seemed rather to mock her sorrows than to pity them; at least so the spectators judged the performance. We arrived at the fifth act; and when, after she had said 'Bequeath me something—but one kiss at parting,' the lovers ran to each other's arms, Belvidera was seen to fairly *bite* her lord upon the cheek in lieu of *kissing* him! Jaffier could scarcely finish his part, he smarted so with the pain."

Sir Geoffrey laughed heartily at this narrative.

"The dog must have vexed her sorely, I doubt not. Very likely he deserved all she gave him. Though to bite a man's cheek—the vixen! It might have been a serious matter. A lovers' quarrel, I suppose; but it was sadly out of place in Mr. Otway's tragedy. I know the play. I saw Betterton and Mrs. Barry in it, years ago. And I cried like a child, I remember."

IV.

At the back of the play-house, behind the scenes, dimly lighted by tallow-candles, amidst much litter of theatrical properties and stage furniture, two of the players were engaged in an earnest and somewhat angry conversation. The one was Mrs. Margaret Askew—splendidly dressed in a pink-satin train—the Leonora of Mr. Crown's comedy; the other was Mr. George Knevit, the Sir Courtly Nice of the evening.

The lady was very handsome; though her beauty was of rather a sagged kind. In spite of her rouge, there was a hollow look about

her wonderful black eyes. Her complexion—naturally dark, even to swarthy—was much aided and brightened by the candle-light of the theatre. She was still quite young, notwithstanding the rather deep lines upon her face; and, famed for her personal charms and her skill as an actress, was a favourite toast among the gallants of the day. At the present, however, she was hardly looking her best. She could smile most wittingly when she chose; but she was not smiling now. She was, indeed, very angry. Her forehead was clouded, and she had been biting her red lips until they were wet with blood.

Knevit was superb in Sir Courtly's dress. His Antinous profile looked out from a profuse blonde periwig that reached to his waist. The streaming curls on one side were tossed over his shoulder, after the fashion Kneller's portraits of the men of his time has made famous. His coat was of rich green velvet, with broad gold-lace edging, and shoulder-knots of scarlet satin ribbon. His long waistcoat was of white brocade; his stockings, with embroidered clocks, were scarlet, as were the high heels of his Spanish-leather shoes. His long lace neckerchief was worn in the studious unstudied fashion that had come in vogue since the battle of Steinkirk. A gold-hilted sword, a tall tasselled cane, and a beaver hat, thickly fringed with feathers and thrust beneath his arm, completed the costume of the magnificent fop he was to represent in the comedy.

"You've no heart, George Knevit," said Mrs. Askew passionately.

"Quite true," he answered, with a sort of gay scorn. "Still, I had one once; as good a heart for ordinary wear as a man need have. I must make shift now to do without it, I suppose. I gave it away—lent it, rather, to a woman who used it shamefully, and returned it, wounded, crushed, bleeding, worthless. No; I've no heart now."

"You never loved me."

"Did I not? And yet I thought I did. And you thought so too."

"You know you never did. If you had ever loved me, you would not mock me as now you do."

"The mocking has not been all on my side. Is one to go on loving for ever, whatever may betide?" He took snuff with a grand air. "I value *this*," he went on, tapping his box as he spoke. "'Twas given me for gold; I deem it gold; but if one day scratches should come upon it, and make clear to me past all mistake that it is but base metal, for all it wears so bright a lacquer, should I not be a dolt and a madman still to deem it gold, and value it as now I do? No, no; I am fool enough for most things; but not for that. If the idol we bow before is but simple clay, for all our faith in it and devotion to it, be sure we find out the fact some day, and topple the thing down from our altar, never to lift it up or to bow to it again!"

Something of both the manner and the matter of the theatre was in his speech. What wonder? Was he not an actor? And then in Mr. Knevit's day all conversation assumed a tone of somewhat artificial

elevation—being, as it were, surmounted by a tall periwig, and moving about on high-heeled shoes.

"If you knew all, George—if you knew all!" moaned Mrs. Askew.

"I thank you, mistress. I think I know enough," he said coldly.

"And you despise me?"

"I despise myself. It was not *you* that deceived me; I deceived myself. I have but myself to thank that my deception has cost me so dear. And it *has* cost me dear. Be assured of that." His voice trembled rather as he spoke.

"Try to think well of me, George."

"To what end? Do you want my heart mended, that you may rive it again, as children build up houses of cards for the pleasure of knocking them down? That cannot be. I was mad to think that you were better than the herd among which I found you. It was not your fault; it was my folly that I tried to find a diamond in a lead-mine. You stood out for your price; that was all. You were not in truth better than the rest. Nay, let me value rather the reckless wench who lets herself go at the cheapest rate; there may be a grain or so of heart, of honest liking, in her bargain. There can be none in yours: a glass coach, with footmen to run in front, and wax flam-beaux to attend you; a black boy for your lapdog, and a plenty of money in your purse! Well, you've found a market; you've received the stipulated price; the transaction's closed. May you never see cause to repent it!"

"What right have you to address me thus, George Knevit?" she demanded fiercely.

"The right the love I once had for you has given me. It was a poor thing, doubtless. You thought so; you treated it so. But poor as it was, it was a thing you will never know again. Be happy with this boor who has bought you—this sot—this Welsh goat from the mountains! Will you weary first, or will he?"

"How dare you say this to me?"

"Nay, never scowl, mistress. The fire in your eyes has no terrors for me. You have not to *love* me to-night as in yesterday's play." With a laugh, he raised his hand to his face. "The mark still shows, I fear. I must pile on the paint to hide it."

"I was mad last night! You goad me and torture me, and then marvel that I turn upon you. Your bitterness, your cruelty raise a devil in my heart I seek in vain to lay; and then—and then—my brain whirls, and I know not what I do! It shall not happen again; only be merciful to me, George. Your tongue wounds me like a knife."

"I have had my say, mistress. My tongue shall wound you no more."

"And—though all is over between us—" she paused, as though reluctant to believe that all was in truth over.

"For ever," he said firmly.

"Still we need not be enemies."

"Why should we be? We are simply players, that is all; followers of the same vagabond trade—now loving, now hating; now swearing devotion, now vowing vengeance; players always, our real selves never. If we are enemies, it shall only be on the stage—just as if we are lovers again, still it shall only be on the stage. For the rest, we are members of the same troop, bound to be loyal to our manager, to the public, and to each other. Ask my aid when you will—as an actress; I will give it you—as an actor. There's my hand upon it."

She took his hand with an effort, sighing and agitated, yet mastering her emotion.

"Is that the first music?" she asked. "Do I look disordered? Have my tears spoilt my paint? I have to begin the scene. Why, you've forgotten your rings! But you're not on in this act."

"I left them behind me at my lodgings by mistake. Never mind; I must play without them."

"What a pity! Stay; wear this. You must have a ring."

"It does not matter."

"Sir Courtly *must* wear a ring! Remember what you said but now. You're not too proud to accept this small aid from a fellow-player?"

"I'll wear it. A real stone?"

"Nay, a bit of tinsel. Where are your eyes? Keep it, George; it fits you."

"I must not."

"It's worth nothing. Are you so proud? Keep it as a pledge of our new contract."

"Well, as you will, mistress." And he slid the ring on his finger.

She was called by the prompter; and tripped on to the stage as Leonora. A round of applause greeted the favourite actress.

v.

"'Tis a gay, sparkling, witty soul," said Sir Geoffrey, who, though he would every now and then pause to remind his companion that the entertainment was singularly inferior to the performances he had witnessed as a younger man, nevertheless appeared to derive more amusement from the efforts of the players than any other person in the theatre. He laughed loudly at the humours of the comedy—which were of rather an unrestrained kind—and applauded the comedians with most thorough heartiness. Mr. Hervey, on the other hand, seemed a little apprehensive that his character as a critic might suffer detriment from association with one who, in spite of his lamentations over the past, appeared to find matter to praise in all he saw and heard. For the benefit of the persons occupying the benches near him, therefore, *the Templar* from time to time delivered himself of many ingenious

comments on the actors and the acting. He found reason to censure the redundant grotesqueness of the representatives of the comic characters of the play. "This is not nature," he would say; or, "This is only fit for a droll at Bartholomew Fair;" or, "For what does this fellow take us, that he treats us to such low buffoonery?" To Mr. Knevit, however, he awarded praise of a high order. "He is no longer Knevit," he remarked; "he is Sir Courtly himself! Observe his insipid, soft civility, his formal elegance of mien, his drawling delicacy of voice, the stately flatness of his address and the empty eminence of his manners;" and so on. Mrs. Askew, Mr. Hervey thought, was hardly herself on that evening; the part did not very well suit her, as it seemed to him.

"Sdeath," said Sir Geoffrey, "'tis a very mirthful play; and the raps at the Puritans very pleasant and adroit. I have laughed till my sides ache."

In the course of the performance a slight disturbance occurred. Two gentlemen had passed from the pit to the seats on the stage. The money-taker had objected to admit them without their paying the usual increased price for this accommodation.

"Give me no words, fellow, or I'll slit your nose for you. Let me pass," bawled one of the gentlemen, with an oath.

"I dared not say him nay," the money-taker explained afterwards. "He is a parliament-man, and a roystering, scouring blade. It would be more than my life is worth to hinder him—in such a mood too."

"It is Sir Owen Price," Mr. Hervey whispered to his companion. "In liquor too, as usual; with his rake-hell friend Major Moxon by his side. I pray we may not have a brawl upon the stage."

Noisily, his dress disordered, his wig awry, his eyes inflamed, his face smeared with snuff, Sir Owen Price staggered to his seat. He was pretty quiet for some time, beyond hiccupping occasionally. He gazed round him with dim vacant eyes, as though wondering where he was. The gallery tittered a little at the tipsy gentleman, and a wag in that upper region of the house hurled an orange at him, but not with very good aim; the fruit fell harmlessly into the orchestra.

Knevit was going through his chief scene with Mrs. Askew. Sir Courtly was simpering and drawling and taking snuff in his most exquisitely coxcombical manner.

"Blood!" Sir Owen said, with a sudden start, to his comrade; "do you mark what the scoundrel wears on his finger?"

"Hush!" whispered Major Moxon; "not a word now. I'll see to it. You shall have your vengeance, Owen."

Knevit and Mrs. Askew finished their scene amidst a tumult of applause.

"Mrs. Askew is certainly not herself to-night," noted Mr. Hervey.

"What was the matter with you, mistress?" Knevit inquired of

his play-fellow as they stood in the wings. "How you trembled! How pale you turned! And you missed your cues."

"George, for God's sake, take off that ring!" she said, with a scared look on her face.

"Why?"

"I'll tell you all another time. Mischief will come of your wearing it. For God's sake, take it off!" He stood for a moment irresolute, amazed; glancing from her to the ring, from the ring to her.

"I understand," he said at length, with a flash of scorn in his eyes. "It is a real stone! Fool that I was! I might have guessed as much. It was a present from the Welsh sot, your lover; and you fear lest he should recognise it! You would have me share in the wages of your shame! Out on you, wanton!"

He tore off the ring from his finger, flung it at her feet, thrust her from him, and turned away.

VI.

On his way home, after the play, to his lodgings in Howard-street, Strand, George Knevit was confronted by two men.

"What would you with me, Sir Owen?" he demanded.

"I'd send my fist down your throat, vagabond."

"I have no quarrel with you, Sir Owen. Let me pass."

Sir Owen by way of answer dashed his hat in the player's face.

"Coward and brute!" cried Knevit, as he sprung back and drew his sword. "Defend yourself!"

"Nay, a gentleman can't cross weapons with a mountebank, though he may wear the finest diamonds in the world," said Major Moxon.

"Stand away, sir; you have no share in this quarrel. It was none of my seeking; but being begun, it shall go on. My blood's up now. Draw, Sir Owen, as you are a man!"

Major Moxon pulled away his friend.

"Poltroon as well as sot!" cried the actor. "Nay, you don't escape me. Sure a blow will kindle your dull boor's blood." And with the flat of his sword he struck Sir Owen on the shoulder.

"Let me fight him!" bawled the baronet.

"Nay, we've a better card than that to play!" The major whistled. Three men sprang from the shadow of a doorway. "We cudgel players; we don't cross swords with them. That's your man. At him, you dogs! Don't spare him!"

Knevit was surrounded. He sought to defend himself with his sword; but a savage blow broke his wrist, and his weapon fell from his grasp.

"Help!—help!—watch!" he screamed. Sir Owen and his friend made good their escape.

The blows rained down upon the face and head and shoulders of the devoted player. Streaming with blood, he fell in the roadway.

"O God, I'm blind!" he said feebly. "I'm a dead man!"

A few more cowardly blows as he lay senseless on the ground, and his assailants hurried away.

The watch came up slowly, after their manner, recognised the suffering man, and bore him to his lodgings. "They had suspicions," they averred, "as to the guilty persons. Sir Owen Price and Major Moxon had been seen loitering about, swearing to have George Knevit's blood. They (the watch) knew that no good would come of it all. They had said so from the first."

VII.

George Knevit never spoke more. A skilful ch'irurgeon was called in; but he at once pronounced the case hopeless. The poor player's wounds were mortal.

He still breathed; that was all that could be said. For the rest, he lay stretched upon his bed, motionless, inanimate, a light napkin hiding the bruised, disfigured, maltreated face: once so handsome!

Mrs. Askew had been sent for, and was admitted to the chamber in which he lay. She was trembling in every limb, white as a ghost, sick with terror and anguish. How she shivered and turned away as she beheld the napkin hiding the Antinous features she was never more to look on!

"I may speak to him?—I may take his hand?" she asked faintly.

"Yes, if you will have it so, mistress," said the doctor. "It little matters what is done now. Only *don't remove the cloth from his face!*"

She knelt down by the player's bedside, and took his hand between hers. She trembled—his hand was so cold.

"If he could only hear me!" she moaned. And the tears streamed down her face. She was left alone with him.

Presently she was moved by a sort of crazy fancy that she would speak to him, even though he could not hear her, even though he was wholly dead to her.

"I have loved you—loved you ever, George," she began in a low soft voice; "God knows I have! and you have misjudged me—misjudged me cruelly. Yet it was not your fault, dearest. I ought to have told you all, all, from the first; but shame kept me silent. My father is in prison on a charge of coining. I shrunk from telling you. I feared you would think me also involved in the disgrace, and so, unworthy of your love. When I listened to this dreadful man,—this Welsh fiend, this monster, who has brought death upon you, dearest, and misery worse than death upon me—and I *did* listen to him, yet not as you thought,—it was to win him over—for he is powerful, and has powerful friends at court—to obtain my father's pardon. Was it so great a sin? Could I refuse his presents? I did not dare. To offend him was to lose all hope of saving my father's life. Yet never, never, George, *was I guilty* in deed, or word, or thought of the

are very uncertain about the date of the north tower of the ancient church, but it is of great age. If Ireland be the island of saints, Cornwall may well be called the county of saints. There are about 144 parishes in England and Wales whose names are taken from saints, and of these 56 are in Cornwall. And some of these saints have greatly distinguished themselves, in ways both saintly and unsaintly. St. Just, accepting the hospitality of St. Keverne, is recorded to have stolen the gold cup from which he had drunk excellent wine, but St. Keverne followed him and pelted him with stones till he dropped the chalice. The stones which he threw lie upon Crousa Down to this day. There is also recorded a similar encounter between St. Just and St. Sennen, two muscular Christians of that primeval time. But St. Neot, a pigmy saint fifteen inches high, was the most remarkable of the brotherhood; and his miracles are depicted upon stained glass in his church near Liskeard. They are really very respectable miracles. That wild deer should come and willingly bow their necks to the yoke, when thieves stole his oxen, may seem commonplace, but nobody can make a similar objection to the story of the three fishes, placed by an angel in St. Neot's well for the saint's sustenance. He was to eat one a day, and there would be always three. But, the saint being ill, his too zealous servant caught two of them, and dressed each in a different way, to tempt the holy man's appetite. St. Neot ordered the fish to be thrown back into the well, where they at once came to life again. The well is there still, with a granite arch over it, but the fish are gone; nor will the traveller see the Lilliputian saint standing up to his neck in water while reciting the Psalter, as was his wont daily.

Holy wells are a Cornish peculiarity. St. Ludgvan's, in the old time, possessed the power of making the eye-sight keener and the speech clearer; its only endowment now is that those who are christened with its water are safe from hanging. St. Keyne's, as readers of Southey are aware, confers matrimonial supremacy on the husband or wife who first drinks of it after marriage. Five large trees, an oak, an elm, and three ash trees, grow out of the masonry which covers this picturesque well. Other famous springs there are, too numerous to describe; but the Kieve or waterfall of St. Nectan or Nighton must not be forgotten, in whose depths the saint dropped a silver bell, which may never be recovered until the Christian faith recovers its antique purity. A beautiful legend, linked to as beautiful a scene. But Mr. Wilkie Collins, when rambling "beyond railways," failed to find the Kieve; and Mr. Robert Hunt, whose recent work on Cornish superstitions would be more interesting if more condensed, is indignant that the "nymph of the waterfall" should be kept under lock and key by a neighbouring farmer. This system, necessary, perhaps, in the tourist-trodden Isle of Wight, seems absurd in the wilds of Cornwall.

Whitesand Bay, aptly named, and the quaint old myrtle-shrouded towns of East and West Looe, little altered since Edward I.'s days, are

THROUGH CORNWALL

THE counties of England differ very widely in their characteristics. Although, thirty or forty miles from London, it is easy to find wild heaths, and belts of beech-forest, and lonely valleys that might be leagues from human habitations, yet the shadow of the great City seems still to fall upon us. We know that if we climb yonder beacon, we may catch sight of royal towers, may perhaps see Sydenham's fantastic palace gleaming on the verge. Now the Londoner who desires to forget London, may effectually attain his object by visiting that beautiful peninsula which Tamar and Torridge divide into two counties. If, taking the rail from Paddington, he will turn pedestrian as soon as he has crossed Brunel's wondrous bridge over the Tamar, I can promise him a tour as enjoyable, and scenes as new and strange as if he were among the Alps. And he will meet fewer fellow-tourists—fewer of those dusty and determined people who travel as a duty, and would on no account omit seeing any thing noticed by Murray.

Murray, by the way, whose Handbook to Devon and Cornwall is one of the best of the series (though the pedestrian would prefer it in two volumes instead of one), suggests a walking tour of thirty days in Cornwall. A good walker may probably exhaust the county in less time. Although I have lived in it, I have never, as with other counties, tried the experiment of walking through it at one stretch. Assuredly a month spent in Cornwall may be a very delightful month indeed. But I will briefly follow the route suggested, starting from Saltash, the first town in Cornwall. Well do I remember how four horses toiled to drag the mail-coach up the steep street of this quaint old borough town. Now you cross the Albert Bridge, without wondering so much at the mighty viaduct as if you had seen its giant tubes lifted into their place by hydraulic pressure. The mayor of Saltash is a man of no slight importance; Murray describes him as "by virtue of his office coroner for the borough of Plymouth;" but his coronership really extends only to the ships in the harbour. Plymouth harbour is, in fact, in the jurisdiction of Saltash for all purposes, a silver oar being the mayor's symbol of authority; and shipping dues are still paid to the corporation of Saltash. I heard Mr. Commissioner Hare remark that, if the revenues of Saltash borough had not been wasted, they would have exceeded those of Liverpool. Saltash is peculiarly famous for its feminine rowers. If you want a boat on the Tamar, you must be content to be rowed by women: the men are too indolent. I have seen the women pull at Saltash regatta, and can speak well of their powers.

St. Germans follows, whose church was the cathedral of Cornwall, and whose name gives the courtly Eliots their title of earl. Antiquaries

people bring branches and flowers from the fields, and dance hand in hand, not only through the streets, but through the houses also. What a pity that Herrick, when he held a Devonshire living, had not seen these strange Floralia, and celebrated them in vernal song! Near Helston is the Loe Pool, a lake separated from the sea by a bar of small pebbles. Loe Bar is, in Cornish tradition, attributed to the giant Tregeagle, a most grotesque monster, in whose legend ancient and modern myth are curiously blended. There was, it seems, an actual Tregeagle, steward to Lord Robartes, of Lanhydrock, about two centuries ago, and quite a model unjust steward. He received from a tenant a payment of rent, but made no entry of it; after his death, his successor sued the man for his rent, and the defendant, by some unexplained means, brought into court no less important a witness than Tregeagle's ghost, whereupon the plaintiff was nonsuited. But, the case being over, Tregeagle declined to return to the grave. So he was sentenced, according to one account, to empty Dozmare Pool with a limpet-shell; according to others, to make trusses of sand and bind them with ropes of the same material; and it was during some such impossible labour that he dropped the sack of sand which forms Loe Bar. Moormen and fishermen, hearing the wild wind wail around pinnacles of rock, believe that it is the cry of the tortured Tregeagle.

South of Helston is the Lizard district, every inch of whose divine coast deserves to be traversed. From the dangerous rocks called the Manacles to Lizard Point, there comes a succession of beautiful sheltered coves, each differing from the last. It is impossible to describe the beauty of the rocks of serpentine, diallage, hornblende, felspar, which abound on the Lizard coast. This district is a paradise for geologists, and consequently for botanists, for where the serpentine is, there also is *Erica vagans*; and in Kynance Cove, one does not know whether most to admire the variety of the rocks or of the plants. The devil has his share in the mythology of the Lizard. In Asparagus Island a deep chasm is known as his Bellows, from which with thunderous sound issues at intervals a mass of water. His Post-office is an orifice at which, if you hold a sheet of paper, it is suddenly torn from your hand, and there comes back an answer of wind and water mingled. High up on the island you may look down into his hideous Throat, where the foam boils eternally. And at the fishing village of Cadgewith you may see his Frying-pan, a pit into which the sea enters at flood-tides.

After exploring the Lizard, the traveller will go on to Marazion and Penzance. Marazion is chiefly remarkable for its perplexing name and its very good turnips. But turn southward—

“Where the great vision of the guarded mount
Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold.”

St. Michael's Mount, on which stands the castle of the St. Aubyns, can be approached at low water by a causeway 450 yards long. The

older parts of the castle are interesting, especially the Chevy Chase Room, which was the monastic refectory. The road from Marazion to Penzance, along the margin of Mount's Bay, is beautiful beyond description, and Penzance itself is an interesting town, with hotels where the tourist can have a little luxury for a change, with a delicious climate, and with a unique capacity for producing early vegetables. The writer of Murray's Handbook seems rather surprised that the Penzance people should make the conger eel into pies; if he had lived in the Channel Islands, he would probably have learnt to relish conger soup. I am told that the conger is largely used as a basis for the turtle soup consumed in London. The eves of St. John and St. Peter are in Penzance celebrated by bonfires—a relic of the worship of the sun.

Penzance is a capital centre for excursions and for thoroughly exploring the Land's End. St. Ives must be visited, of course. Near it, on a hill, is a pyramidal monument to one John Knill, a bencher of Gray's Inn, who left some land with a will to the effect that every five years a matron and ten maidens, in white vestures, should walk in procession to the pyramid, dance round it, and sing the 100th Psalm. He is not, however, buried here, as he left his body to the anatomists of London. Cape Cornwall and St. Just, with the perilous workings of Botallack mine, form another day's excursion; and any one who gets thus far should not return without descending into the depths of this renowned mine, and hearing the ocean roaring above him. I will not attempt to describe the glory of the Land's End, where, when there is a fresh breeze, one gets some idea of the everlasting strife between the restless sea and the rocks which guard the land. Is Arthur's Lyonnesse really hidden beneath the seething waters that stretch south-western to the Cassiterides?

The tourist, on his return journey, will take Redruth and Bodmin, the former of which lies in the heart of an important mining district. Halfway from Bodmin to Launceston is the Jamaica Inn, close to the finest inland scenery of Cornwall. Here the wild hills of Brown Willy and Roughtor, the rugged valleys of Hanter Gantick and Hannon, are well worth exploring. Dozmare Pool, a favourite haunt of the demon Tregagle, lies in the same wide moorland. And, to my mind a scene of no common interest, there is the small farmstead where Adams the astronomer was born, and where, when I last crossed those moors, his father still held the even tenour of his way. To look at that little farm-house, and then to think of the successful search for an unknown planet in the outer limits of the solar system, made by the Cornish farmer's son, is a striking lesson on the might of genius.

Launceston, once called Dunheved, has a fine old ruinous castle, rising high above the town. The church, built entirely of granite, is remarkable as having all the stones carved. This borough and its suburb of Newport, returned four members to Parliament before the

Reform Act; it now returns one, who really represents the proprietor of the Werrington estate. This property has recently been purchased from the Duke of Northumberland by Mr. Campbell, the present member for Launceston—a change not noticed by Murray. Cornwall was quite a county of rotten boroughs; the Reform Act reduced its representatives from forty-four to fourteen, and I suppose any future act of the same nature will scarcely leave it untouched.

From Launceston the tourist will make for the northern coast, “the thundering shores of Bude and Boss.” Here are the ruins of renowned Tintagel, high upon a cliff which, as Norden says, a man must have eyes to scale. These ruins, partly on the mainland, partly on a peninsular rock which the sea is rapidly making into an island, are said to have been connected by a drawbridge. Here, according to the Arthurean romance, as edited in Henry II.’s reign by the poetic and humorous archdeacon who wrote

“Mihi est propositum in taberna mori,”

Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, left his wife in apparent safety, while he defended Dimiloch against Uther Pendragon, who was smitten by Igera’s beauty. Safe she would have been, doubtless, but for the magic of Merlin, who brought Uther into Tintagel in the likeness of Gorlois. Igera welcomed him, and gave him full goblets of mead, and rest upon her white bosom, while her true lord lay slain in a sally before the ramparts of Dimiloch. And thus was Arthur born.

The romance of Arthur, which Mr. Tennyson has vivified and idealised for us, has left few traces in Cornwall. There is a vague belief that the king was changed into a Cornish chough, which bird it is deemed unlucky to kill. And we may try to identify the commonplace little town of Camelford with that charmed Camelot, where Launcelot met Guinevere,

“All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine-clad, of Arthur’s palace toward the stream.”

But the inquirer will find no traces anywhere of the great myth, except (as I learn from Murray) that Cornish maidens are still christened *Jennifer* after the faithless queen.

All the coast from Tintagel to Bude (where Mr. Gurney invented the Bude Light) is full of wild sublimity. Boscastle is properly Bottreaux Castle; and the parish church of Bottreaux is famed for its silent tower. Ages ago the Bottreaux people were envious of Tintagel bells—bells said to have been tolled when Arthur was slain. So they sent to London for a tunable peal, which came by sea; and the pious pilot, hearing Tintagel bells ringing vespers, thanked God for the safe voyage; whereon the impious captain said, “Thank me and the good ship; you can thank God ashore.” And a storm arose, and the ship foundered, and the pilot alone was saved. Even now, amid the storms, you may hear Bottreaux bells tolling fathoms deep in the sea. A local

poet, of more than average excellence, the Rev. R. Hawker, has a fine ballad on "The Silent Tower of Bottreaux:"

"The ship rode down, with courses free,
The daughter of a distant sea,
Her sheet was loose, her anchor stored,
The merry Bottreaux bells on board—
 'Come to thy God in time!'
 Rung out Tintagel's chime—
 'Youth, manhood, old age past,
 Come to thy God at last!'"

From Willapark Point, near Boscastle, there is one of the most fearfully sublime prospects on the Cornish coast.

It is no wonder that the Cornish are a superstitious race. Fishermen and miners are natural lovers of legends. The strange sounds of the winds and waves on those wild shores have suggested the yells of the tortured Tregagle and the deep toll of the lost bells of Bottreaux. The ghostly shadows seen in the imperfect light of the mines, the vague noises heard in those deep workings, have given rise to tales of phantom dogs, of spectral hands in the shafts, of voices and knockings. The vast masses of granite and other rock, placed in strange positions, piled one on another, as in the Cheesewring, balanced, as in the Logans, are easily accounted for if we assume a race of early giants, enormously powerful, and given to rough kinds of play. It is hard to say why Sir Francis Drake should be a hero of magical myth in Tamar land, but he is so. The "leat," or water-course which supplies Plymouth with water from the moorland, is said to have broken its way through the land, following his horse's tail as he rode. And there is a story of his wife's deeming herself widowed while he voyaged round the world, and of her attempt to commit bigamy being prevented by a cannon-ball which the gallant sailor aimed so well from the Antipodes, that it came up through the chancel-floor of St. Andrew's church at Plymouth. The most characteristic portion of Cornish folk-lore relates to fairy widowers, who entice mortal maidens to nurse their children. And the most remarkable statement we have seen on the subject is due to Mr. Robert Hunt, who says, "A gentleman *well known in the literary world of London*, very recently told me that he once saw in Devonshire a troop of fairies!" I, though a haunter of Devon's most solitary nooks, have never known that fortune.

There are men living who can remember the time when the traffic of Cornwall was almost entirely carried on by means of mules. The royal mail found its way into this county last of all. And now, though Brunel bridged the Tamar, a glance at the map shows that here it is easy to get beyond railways.

Sixty years since, a west-country clergyman expounding the parable of the "Supper and the unwilling guests," denounced the excuse of the man "who had married a wife, and therefore could not come," as

"frivolous indeed." "Why, he might have brought her behind him on a pillion." There are no ladies to be seen upon pillions now, though the farmers' daughters are famous hands at riding to market. There seem, by the way, to be two distinct races in Cornwall, if we may judge by the women. Along the coast and in the fishing towns the type of youthful beauty is plump and dumpy, rubicund and rotund; but elsewhere the traveller meets a more graceful style of maiden, lithe, long-waisted, and lissom. The men are usually short and broad-chested; famous wrestlers, whose centre of gravity lies low. They say a company of Cornish volunteers stands on more ground than the same number from any other county.

I must not omit to notice the immense good wrought by John Wesley among the miners and fishermen of Cornwall. His strong eloquence worked a wonderful reform in a superstitious people, who needed a lively and soul-stirring form of religion. He found in the daring wreckers and blasphemous tanners the very material for class-meetings and revivals. He made them religious; he cured them of drunkenness and barbarism; and there is probably nowhere in England (I do not of course compare the "grave livers" of Scotland) a population so generally and constantly actuated by religious considerations.

He who desires to spend his vacation by the sea, but shrinks from that most unsatisfactory place of residence, the fashionable watering-place; he who likes the converse of sailors and fishermen, racy of tar and of the brine; he who, being married, likes to see his wife wandering on the yellow sands in such costume as suits her, fearless of elegant acquaintances; likes to teach his boys to swim, and catch shrimps, and manage a boat, and fish for mackerel; he who likes clotted cream, produce of cattle that wander amid heather and wild thyme, and moorland mutton, and fowls as big as turkeys; and can drink hard cider, and eat pilchard pie; he who loves wild solitudes and bluff headlands torn by the fury of the Atlantic gale, and picturesque haunts of antique tradition, and inexplicable memorials of races perished long ago—will do well to seek some fishing village on the Cornish coast, far from any railway station. And there he may see, "waiting for the boats," some such figure as that depicted in a charming little sea-side painting of Henzell's now before me:

A fisher-girl!

Why, whence came all that beauty? Was it kissed
Into her red cheeks by the reckless wind?
Brought to her by the ever-living brine
Which woos the Hesperian isles, and twinkles brightly
About the shelving shores where Circe dwelt?

MORTIMER COLLINS.

ON BALLS

IN a certain sense Balls are connected with the grand selfishness which is the feature of the nineteenth century. The older balls of the days of our grandsires and great-grandfathers had a purpose—selfish perhaps at the bottom, but certainly not displayed with the accepted brazenness which is also “a note” of our century. For these, as any *very* old lady that has seen fashionable days at Bath, or at her county assize ball, will tell us, were more a pageant—a stately competition. “I recollect,” she will say, “on the night the Duke of York came down, I and John Mantower went to The Rooms; and you never saw such a sight. They were all sitting round in three rows, my dear; and Lady Kildaff and Mrs. Long of Eaton had made up their fight just for *that* night. And you should have seen Colonel Walpole, the Master of the Ceremonies, leading out Miss Wynne, a pretty little thing of only seventeen. I never shall forget the lovely way he did it, though he was past sixty at *that* time; but he was such an elegant picture of a man, my dear, and always was. All the mothers and their fine daughters had to sit, bursting with envy, while he and this little chit stood out on the floor and danced the *minuet* before the duke.” This was the old pattern and procedure. Every one had their turn. And if some had to wait long for that turn, and enjoyed but one turn in the night, still the full and satisfactory publicity of this turn more than indemnified. The ball then was a duty of life, and the solemn posturings and graceful attitudinising of the solemn dance might have brought profit, but certainly not much pleasure, to the votary.

Now the world is grown more of a sybarite; we are less for show and more for amusement. There could have been small physical enjoyment in the solemn exercises of the minuet; and as the age of brisk competition drew on, with the demand for a fair field open to all, such a restricted and perhaps partial kind of exercise was felt to be out of keeping with the wants of the time. That was a courageous and useful benefactor who introduced the delightful, but unholy waltz. Did not this bewitching dance solve the grand problem conciliating both business and amusement, which originally should not have been hostile, and made nuptial interest and social pleasure kiss? We who go forth of nights, and see without the slightest discomposure our sister and our wife seized on by a strange man, and subjected to violent embraces and canterings round a small-sized apartment—the only apparent excuse for such treatment being that it is done to the sound of music—can scarcely realise the horror which greeted the introduction of this wicked dance. It of course came from France; and a few of the older caricatures and social “skits” of the time

will show how shocked, almost *écrasée*, was the maternal instinct of the day. Like all true maternal instinct, however, it gave way in due time to the maternal interest. A little reflection will certainly show, what has been already hinted, that it is music, and music alone, that redeems a ball from being a mere insane and unmeaning proceeding, and a waltz from being a simple and unmannerly deed of violence. But for the attendant harmony, the man could not be said to lay his hand on the woman in the way of kindness; and he would, besides, appear justly to incur the penalties of treasons, stratagems, and spoils. How absurd would be a waltz without music!—that is, if the human mind could bring itself to realise the spectacle of a company of ladies and gentlemen dancing unmeaningly round a room in perfect silence. Apart from its ludicrousness, it would have about as rational an air as the galloping of children round the nursery. By merely stopping the ears during a ball, and looking on at a frantic waltz, the philosopher will see his fellows engaged in as degraded and contemptible gambols as he could conceive of any South-Sea Islanders. Let him remove his fingers, and the whole becomes conventionally rational on the instant.

After all, a ball is the true charm of social life. Remove that one feature, and a very heavy, but no doubt practical, sediment remains behind of routs, drums, "teas," musical *réunions*, and such-like. It is the substitution of strong ales for champagne. Take it for all in all, it is the cheapest and most uncloying of pastimes. After the busy day of stern prose, of hard figures, of strong unflattering daylight, and perhaps of the rubs and scrubs of life, it is pleasant to turn aside off the dull high-road into these fanciful and theatrical pastures, where there is a great white hall, and a blaze of soft lights, and a smooth and glistening floor, and the scent and colours of flowers; where there are fine figures and fine dresses and fine faces, and the loveliest in and out of our parish; where the horizon seems to glisten with distant shoulders, and the apparel of every lady, in compliment to the festival, *commence trop tard*. There do age and ugliness become tolerable to the youthful eye, and enjoy the homage of being taken down and fed, Elijah-like, by good-looking young ravens; while even men who have abused the privilege of being ugly, and who have spent a life of much knocking about and battering, by dint of fresh well-made clothes and bright fine linen, become glorified into ornamental, or at least passable fellow-creatures.

As for the little courtesies in a small seething chamber, where there is nothing but population and an indecent overcrowding, so outrageous as justly to require the interference of the Tenements Commissioners,—to such scenes these remarks do not apply. I am speaking of the Ball proper:—the goodly large sweep; plenty of room; plenty of floor; plenty of music; and plenty of dancers; and plenty of supper. Others would add to this, plenty of "pretty girls,"

or plenty of "men," according as they belong to the delf or china of the sexes. And this, indeed, is scarcely exhaustive; for the "pretty girls" must not be merely pretty ornaments, without "blood;" they must, after the high-mettled unbroken courser pattern, be restless, eager for battle, and desperate in the fray. On the other hand, these mere dispositions, as is well known, do not avail the gentlemen. For in *their* case "men" has a special and narrow significance, just as it has in a regiment in the mouths of officers. In the mouths of the females who bring their corps into the field, it means good and "desirable" men; that is, men of substance, of rank, or of marked good looks, joined with an agreeability no less marked. Therefore the mere vulgar qualifications of an ardour for the fray, or of a certain skill and steadiness in the use of one's limbs, are held but cheaply. Beauty, good looks, good humour, and even exhilaration, fine clothes, gold and silver, soft music, and a certain wild exercise,—this surely is a combination of pleasure that does credit to the epicurean taste of a century. We may be sure that whatever changes come about in course of time, the Ball is sure to endure; for it is founded on a happy and substantial basis, and the pleasant variety, the alternating of waltz or gallop with the judicious inaction of the quadrille, will prevent coming generations feeling any sameness in this pastime.

The essentials for a true Ball are a good floor and good music. "Waxing" is preferable to the old-fashioned chalking, and is brighter and more glistening to the look, besides being more acceptable to the many twinkling feet. Not so long since, at county and other public balls, the guests' eyes were recreated by fanciful and *appropos* delineations in all the gorgeousness of coloured chalks; a vulgarity which has happily been "rubbed out," like the chalk devices themselves, and which may account for the artists transferring themselves and their labours to the pavements of our streets. The stretched *toile* is odious—a viler and a more fatiguing sham was never conceived by hostess. Let her, if she will, build up degrading whited sepulchres of inferior champagnes, "fair ball wine," and such cheap falsities, trusting to unsuspecting palates, heated and thrown off their centre, as it were, by unnatural thirsts, and midnight hours; but let her avoid the dishonesty of the "cloth." No matter how cunningly stretched—"tight as a drum" it may be, or profess to be—very soon the many twinkling feet work it into wrinkles, which clog and weary the eager sole. Besides the air of the whole is table-clothly, and suggests morning and the breakfast-table. As for the carpet dance—the friendly wheeling away of chairs and tables by coöperative youths, while papa and mamma look on with faint protest, yet with secret pride—while Miss Jenkinwaters "kindly" goes to the instrument and thrums the six-year-old waltz—it is simply abomination.* By and by every thing becomes charged with tropical heats, and gentle clouds of impalpable

* We entirely dissent from this opinion of our contributor.—ED.

dust mount from the carpet, which itself feels like a hot plate. Still mark the testimony to the insatiate love of dancing in the human soul, which accepts even this poor substitute with delight and enthusiasm. But the music—*there* lies the secret of all. There are, of course, natures to whom “one tune is as good as another,” who would as soon have the ear-piercing fife or no less ear-squeaking *single* fiddle, with the accompanying thrum-thrum of the piano, as the finest orchestra. But it makes all the difference notably in the waltz. These are the creatures whom our immortal, divine Williams had in his eye when he described them in a passage scarcely at all known and but too seldom quoted, as being only fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils. But the true amateur understands what a difference this makes. Take the moment when, in the large, long, white-and-gold room, the quadrille is done; every one is “circulating,” crossing and recrossing restlessly, and there is a weaving and interweaving, like the warp and woof of a bit of tapestry—uniforms, bright dresses, brighter faces, scarlet, gold, and flowers. It might reasonably be supposed, at this curious lull, that all was spent; that fatigue, or at least indifference, had set in. Nothing of the sort. These are all in ambuscade, as it were; are, in fact, eager and impatient; and presently above—from the orchestra, from behind the flowers and green leaves—has begun to float the first slow opening of the introduction to the valse. These are Toots and Chinney’s merry men, and they are preluding, solemnly and mournfully, like the slow opening of an opera air. This is *verb. sap.*—a word to the initiated; the music rises and gets fuller, and then comes the pause, the few seconds’ silence, after which Toots and Chinney will lead off in the sad, complaining, most musical and melancholy German strain of “Vien mein Sinn,” or the “Soldaten Lieder.” This is like a mermaid on the rocks—it draws every one in. In a second, all is motion and flight, and every one, with a sort of ardour, has plunged into the dancing waves. The combination of exquisite waltz-music written by a first-class composer—not one of your journeymen—and that “flying” down and up and round again, not with violence, but mere “floating;” when you at last feel tired, but not inclined to stop; when the lights and the pink faces form into great glowing rings that spin round again and again; when you feel that so nice is the balance and so airy the support, that a touch would overturn, but all the while feel perfectly secure—this certainly becomes one of the highest of human enjoyments. Others may add to this, if they please, that some pretty creature is the companion of your felicity, to whom you may talk and whisper as you soar through the firmament. Some will talk of a Peri, that is “light as a feather,” a “neat, compact little thing,” and such familiarities. This is sheer ignorance. Your true dancing gourmand, casting his eyes down the ranks, will choose—and we must ask pardon for developing the coarse metaphor of a coarse-minded military friend, who asked the writer to “get him a good *mount* for the next valse”—will choose,

then, a steady middle-sized "roadster." Some judicious amateurs will even prefer a very tall courser, many hands high, to the opposite extreme. In these latter cases the driver is unfairly balanced and overweighted. His attitude is cramped and uneasy. But where the weights are judiciously distributed, there is that even balance, that giving and taking, which is also the secret of all moral, as well as terpsichorean happiness in this life.

How delightful, after a long night, and when it gets towards three o'clock, and the company is "thinning," the one or two *last* dances! Fresh ardour and electricity come back to exhausted lower limbs with an unnatural strength. Happy the man who, with long foresight, has secured a companion for this hour. At the beginning, we are like careless youth, and not inclined to look forward to an old age, apparently so far off. But it steals on us apace; and then may be seen spendthrift dancers, who have laid up nothing for the winter, rushing wildly from this one to that, and a piteous spectacle of obsequious importunity and degradation. They are the foolish bachelors with no oil in their lamps. At such moments, too, come the triumphs of plain and neglected virgins. They have had oil in their lamps all the night long, poor souls! but it has not been wanted until now. Every article rushes up in price by the sudden demand. Moments, too, are precious; for Toots and Chinney are actually tuning, and every moment the area of produce is narrowing. At such moments, the virtue of constancy trembles in the balance; for to that terpsichorean faith fierce siege is laid, and during the absence of the dancing *fiancé*, his mistress is often carried away by a *coup de main*. At these lawless and early hours the trained amateur had best not let his prey out of sight, for a rival will not scruple to descend to the artifice of a well-organised fiction—as "he has gone away," or, "I saw him in the cloak-room," or some such story, for which, in too many cases, there is no foundation. Sometimes, by an unheard-of piece of good fortune, the guerilla dancer, beating the bushes for prey, and frantically scouring the country for a stray and disengaged companion, finds one who, to his agitated request, gives a favourable reply. It is only the trained professor who knows the delight of this moment. He knows that all is nearly lost: that, on his last visit to the door, when he "muffled" and "put in" Miss Jenkinwater and her mamma, there were the cabs standing out coldly in the chill blues of morning, that already the lamps were turning pale, and that this, in short, is his last chance. *Quel bonheur!* the Frenchman would say. Already Toots and Chinney are dealing out that delightfully stirring strain known as the *Diable au corps galop*, and which makes every foot immediately canter. Wonderful men, those artistes; absolutely fresher at this moment than at the beginning. But so are the dancers. Think of that last dance!—watches all close on four—streaks of daylight at the window—the room *very* clear, and half-a-dozen couple dashing round!

And yet this clear stage—except at such a finale as has been just described—is scarcely to be desired by the genuine amateur. In a great room scantily peopled there is the sense of *want of support*. You are floating in the air. The expanse of ground gone over increases, and fatigue comes on early. For those who like the mere brute sensation of exercise this may be welcome enough; but a nicer sense requires something more. There should be always a modified crowd—not what is forcibly but vulgarly called “a squash,” but an easy sense of repletion on the part of the room. Half the battle, as it is called, is the dexterous pilotage with the sudden entanglement in a dangerous *mêlée*—the prospect of extrication almost hopeless—the chink or opening discerned by the skilful eye, or rather where the skilful eye sees *will* be an opening—the attempt at escape, with failure—a second, crowned with triumphant success—and all effected easily, without a touch, beyond a light brushing. These are the pleasant excitements of the game. Then there is the open country, over which we bound with the sense of new enfranchisement; the sense of coming danger in the shape of a great and awkward rock, round which by an adroit wheel we escape. These are the pleasant fluctuations of this pastime.

The enjoyment of our first Balls have in them something almost exquisite. Many will recal their hobbledehoy days, when taken out by sisters, as a poor and scarcely decent make-shift for the more lawfully accredited chaperone; when the sisters' dressing, not unduly prolonged, seemed a term of agony; and when the ball-room, at last attained, appeared the best known earthly realisation of the Halls of Eblis, or of the scenes associated with the “Wonderful Lamp.” Delightful these were,—the lights and the music, and the lovely beings, who then had what seemed an unaccountable repugnance to trust their persons to the disposition of the raw youth whom the kindly offices of sisters, not wholly ungrateful for the apparent chaperonage, *would* force on these reluctant damsels. And yet this persistence—the presentation being always accompanied with blushes—seemed all but suicidal; for at that time years could not have brought either skill or training; and the nervous plunge into the giddy crowd only led to crushed feet and an awkward and helpless buffeting and bumping in the middle without hope of extrication; which also resulted in being dismissed ignominiously and with unconcealed anger by the charming creature—a Hourî—who nevertheless showed considerable temper. And yet in proportion to this imperfect knowledge is the infatuation for the pastime. For to their honour be it spoken, there are good-natured Samaritans (in low dresses), who speak words of encouragement, and bring us on by degrees, and bestow a scrap of praise, and comfort us after being—with them—knocked out of the ring at length by “canonizing” right off Major Heyhawes' elbow. Such Christian conduct is in bright contrast to the unfeeling Levite woman's, who has long since *passed* by, and is telling the story of *her* grievance, with mixed ridicule

and indignation, to Captain Blowers. Later on, when knowledge came, and a large acquaintance, how agonising to arrive late—too late to “pick up any thing;” when all the thrifty, selfish “beasts of fellows” have greedily secured themselves, and made sure of every “good thing” going, for hours to come! And what torture to wait in the doorway of the enchanted hall, looking in desperately at joys one might not share, and seeing the measured quadrille (though *that* was not such a trial), the seducing waltz, and the tempestuous galop succeed each other!—to see mean creatures that you despise in your inmost soul—beings that you yourself habitually hold cheap—all by this common Scotch virtue of terpsichorean thrift—mere social tortoises—leaving a real social hare so far behind. It was a mere petty advantage; one that the charmers themselves protested against and were obliged to concede to the cruel ordinances of society. How odious the jovial middle-aged and elderly men, who invariably block up doors, and with almost enviable indifference interchange their low jocularly and feeble banter!

Perhaps the best class of Ball, so far as being “well done,” is the military. Soldiers have a handsome prodigality that reaches almost to magnificence. Sometimes this takes the more moderate but not less acceptable shape of “a dance” at their own barracks, which gives a more *domestic* air. They are in their own room and on their own ground. Then are the cold dirty white walls hidden in tapestries of scarlet cloth; then is a boudoir air given to little rooms, and the mean staircase glorified. Nowhere is the military mind seen to such advantage as on these occasions. There is an exercise of all the labours of an anxious host—a softness, a devotion, an *empressement*, that is very pleasing. The company is select, and the whole is sure to be a very “delightful evening.” But there are grander solemnities yet. It has almost grown to be a custom in the capitals of Dublin and Edinburgh that each regiment should return profuse hospitalities by an entertainment of its own. So, towards the end of the season, the great assembly-rooms are secured and turned over to the regimental decorators. Then we are sure to have “trophies,” the stars of swords and cutlasses and muskets, and the profuse flags. In every regiment there are ingenious “hands,” skilled in other professions, whose talents are turned to profit—painters who take the supper-room in hand, and cover its walls with the mottoes and glories of the regiment. Such an entertainment given to a thousand or twelve hundred people becomes a serious undertaking. But they are always “well done;” and the “mess man” is too glad to welcome the opportunity to show what can be done by *his* superior powers as compared with local talent. Some corps are more ambitious than others; and we can recal an entire porch of evergreens outside the door, into which the carriages drove and “set down;” which porch had a living lining of great dragoons, each dragoon holding a blazing torch. There was a dash of poetry under this, highly creditable to the officers’

mind; and these military candelabra set one thinking of Alan and his wager in the "Legend of Montrose."

Do we not all know the country-town Ball—the country town to which we are bound by ties of an hereditary nature, and to which "it is expected" that we shall go, and are indeed not sorry for the excuse. Such a one did the Royal Datchley Rifles give some years back, and I recal it very distinctly. It did not matter that we had to start from a metropolis by the eight P.M. train to get over the forty miles or so of road which lay between—that indeed made it the more pleasant; for at the terminus were many "white ties," and but partially disguised boots, that seemed scarcely of the sort for night-travelling. A crowded train, and a pleasant summer evening. And there was a very full compartment, where it was evident "a party" had been made up; where there were two fair girls and their mamma, and some cheerful gentlemen in great good humour with themselves. There is a glimpse of white opera-cloaks covered up under more sober garments; and no doubt these spirited and courageous ladies, going down their forty miles for a ball, will have a "jolly" night of it.

About ten o'clock we were at the country town—an old decaying place, where there was once a good deal of trade, and whose streets go down a hill to a little river. On one side were old barracks, with a sort of redoubt, where our militia regiment that was giving the ball—the Datchley Rifles—was quartered. In the little town was some mild business, and a good deal of lounging; so there was nothing to distract public interest from the show of the night. As we drove down the hill, and crossed the one-arched bridge below, and went up the other side, among the crowded old houses, where lights were twinkling up and down, there were plenty of loungers about waiting to see the quality go by. It was a quaint old place; had been battered by Cromwell; and long ago, before the railways and fast coaches, had been a sort of capital for the county. In the back-parts were two or three broad good streets, with solid, sound, spacious red-brick houses, where, grandfathers and old officers protested, used to be the gayest fiddling and dancing every night of the week. These days were now gone by. One of the fiddling houses, where the half-pay officers danced, was the county bank; another a "genteel" boarding-school; a third, a wine-merchant's, which was more in keeping with the fine old times. We drove through one of these ghostly streets down to the quay, where was the old market-house and mayoralty, where there was already a gorgeous gas star blazing, and all the town, with its hands in its pockets, assembled round the door to stare at the quality now driving up.

There was an old-fashioned semi-rustic air about the whole; yet there was good intention. Wherever there was a deficiency, scarlet cloth and calico made it up more than handsomely; and if these failed, there were evergreens by the cart-load from Leighton—the Lord Leighton-Buzzard's place. But the old mayoralty rooms, built in

the days of George I., were a little weak and strained about the spine and joints, and it had been found necessary to "shore up" the ball-room with posts—not, however, posts in hideous naked deformity, but converted by the kindly calico and all-accommodating laurel into positive adornment. There was the mayoralty throne at one end, and an oaken gallery over it, which was now filled with the band of the Royal Datchleys. Everybody was in a sort of good-natured excitement, and there was a pleasant air of unsophisticated nature in the whole effort, which, through the mist of some eight or ten years, makes it one of the most welcome of memories. Now they were all coming in; the country people very early, not to be defrauded of a single dance—"fine girls," kept on fasting diet all the year round as to dancing, and now determined to have a gorge; and the county families and the *élite* of the country round, who are *rather* admitted by favour,—“You know we *must* have them, you know,”—and who are received magnificently by the colonel and staff (on plenty of red cloth); and also a mass of husbands, wives, and daughters, all firmly adhering together, fall into nervous and almost abasing bows. It is a great festival for them; coming, not once a year, but perhaps once quinquennially.

The Royal Datchley's officers are great men for that night. They are all stewards, and the humblest ensign of the corps is clothed with authority, and exerts it too; tapping strange visitors on the shoulders, with a “*Will* you be good enough to stand back a little?” and hurrying about on imaginary expresses. Still there is such an excitement abroad, such an eager relish and enjoyment, that it becomes ungracious to look such a gift-horse in the mouth. What shall we say of the Datchley band, which, strengthened by a couple of professionals from the capital, seemed to blow their very hearts out; feeling that the eyes, not of Europe, which they were not dreaming of, but of their COUNTRY were upon them? They had not, indeed, the precision of the regular dancing musicians, and got sadly confused in repeats and such things, making too this waltz as heavy as if it were a march. But no one gave much thought to these things. They worked with a will indeed; and I noticed that the professional from the capital—an inferior fellow on his own ground—now actually stood in the middle as conductor, leading with a violin-bow. To this gentleman must we impute the regulation delays between the dances, sanctioned by the practice of the capital; but against which, I could see, the flushed and panting country young ladies and their companions were bitterly chafing. The instant that one ended, *they* would have commenced another. And when the opportunity came, how they did *burst* into it, like wild-colts breaking away! Happy she who had a Datchley warrior all to herself! At one o'clock came, what all were looking for anxiously, the opening of the supper-room, when the rare and distinguished—the mayor, the colonel, the mayoress, the colonel's wife, and the LORD and LADY LEIGHTON-BUZZARD—moved down in procession. I am not sure about the precedence; but I *believe*

his lordship "took" the colonel's lady, and the colonel her ladyship, thereby, as it was supposed, outraging the feelings of the mayor; who, I believe, in strict propriety, should have been deemed the "first personage" present. But the colonel, a rough, blunt man, who dined and hunted a good deal with his lordship, had remarked "He be d—d!" alluding to the mayor, and allotting him a final punishment quite too severe for his offence, but thus clinching the matter. I have no doubt the severe and satirical remark, in the next impression of the *Datchley Vindicator*, in reference to "this unhappy affair," more than indemnified him. The *Vindicator* said justly, that "they would blush to be in the position of any man, no matter what his station or cloth, who could &c." Well, it is better not to revive what had best be forgotten. And it is certain that the mayor and colonel afterwards met on terms of apparent cordiality.

I am sorry to say, however, that during the progress of supper and during the long night, there were some scenes which had better not have taken place. Thus some stout gentlemen, eminent as breeders of fat stock, and not much "in the line" of such festivals, made some almost indecent attacks on the viands, carrying off whole dishes to corners, sticking their forks into roast fowls and bearing them off whole, to the disgust of the caterer, who attended in a white cap, and said he "never see such born savages in his life." The struggles too for wine—as when some dozen glasses were held out at the same moment to be served from the one bottle—even drew from the white cap a quiet rebuke: "One at a time. It won't fly away. There'll be a drop left." Which nearly had the effect of abashing the claimants.

I could dwell a long time on the incidents of that night: the never-flagging music or dancing; the almost triumphal presentation of visitors from the capital,—who were allowed to "pick" and choose; the rush and crush, as eager towards five o'clock as ever. Then when the dawn had long broke, and it was broad daylight, the crowd about the door were still looking up at the bright windows and the artificial light, and the figures flitting by, or sitting between the shadows of the curtains. Looking down languidly, I saw the steamer that had made the voyage from the port opposite, while they were dancing, gliding up the quay beside them. Then it was time to go, surely, and the company separated, "after a delightful and happy evening" (I quote from the *Vindicator*). There was, indeed, a quarrel between a stout young cattle-breeder and one of the Datchley's; but for obvious reasons, and because there was a *third party* mixed up in it (the reader will know what I mean), I do not wish to revive the matter.

It was a bright morning outside the old market. Porters fresh from sleep were coming down to unload the steamer; passengers from the steamer were coming ashore, looking with wonder at the excited people in wreaths and opera-cloaks, who were getting into carriages. It was near the hour for the morning-mail at six o'clock, and we had

to set off to meet it. We went up the hill by the winding street—past the Datchley Barracks, which had a little tower in a commanding situation, and where a sentry, in the familiar Datchley uniform, was pacing—on to the station, which was rubbing its eyes. The mail would be up in five minutes, and here was the professional from the capital stretched out on a bench, with his jaw dropped, fast asleep. Poor soul! he had earned rest richly; and I could quote a well-deserved tribute from the *Indicator* as to the musical arrangements, but must forbear at present. But as I pass along the carriages of the mail, which has now come up, I almost start as I see a shrunken, ghostly figure shivering in an opera-cloak in the broad glare of daylight, with some glaze-cheeked, fishy-eyed gentlemen, whose “ties” are sadly limp. This is the cheerful “party” who had started from town—how many hours now before?—and this was the moral. They were silent. Where were their gibes *now*? The mamma—unhappy matron!—had her head on one side, in a kind of agonised doze. The men had a sepulchral stare, and were sicklied o’er with a blue cast; while the poor girl, with a draggled wreath, and a chest all fallen in, seemed only eager to keep out the cold. Not unconscious but that I myself must have a shattered look, I chose the decent retirement of a solitary coupé; had a short but *entirely satisfactory* interview with the guard, to secure privacy during the journey; and lying down at the fullest length—there are no divisions on the seats—slept deliciously for two hours. That was the Ball of the Datchley Rifles.

These ball-memories all fall into pictures. I have one of the gambling-place Saturday-night balls at Baden and Homburg, which, for sheer good music and good dancing, cannot be matched. But they are in general thin, and the rooms too large. Of the Dublin-Castle balls also—than which nothing can be better.

Balls, indeed, make the pleasantest *background* for any pleasure, for any meeting with those you wish to meet (the intelligent reader will apprehend); in fact, we need never walk through a crowded ball without being certain that a hundred little comedies, if not melodramas, are going on all about us. We meet the pretty daughter stealing away with the wrong man, dogged by an anxious parent-detective; the less anxious husband straining his eyes to discover the inconstant wife; the brisk flirtation in this corner, weariness and “Do let us get away, mamma,” in another. Here is the *débutante*, to whom it is Paradise; here is the more trained votary, to whom it is a bore; and here is the “hack,” who belongs to the officers pretty much as the *vivandière* belongs to a French regiment. Here are those who might but will not dance, and those who should give over dancing. The secret altercation, conducted with smiles for the world, the unseemly struggle, the air of business in the midst of pleasure. But it would be endless to anatomise the features of a Ball.

PERCY FITZGERALD.

BELGRAVIAN PROSE BALLADS

No. II.

THE FRIENDLY CHOP

I LOVE dropping in to dinner at the Beeches.

It is but the other day I met the owner of that fair domain on the shady side of Pall Mall.

He stopped me and addressed me as his dearest friend. I am not his dearest friend; but it is pleasant to suck in the words of flattery through the straw of self-love.

He shook my hands so cordially, even to squeezing his diamond ring into my third finger, making me painfully conscious of the presence of a jewel of first water, and would not let me go till I had promised to look in and take pot-luck—"just a friendly chop, you know. It's Liberty Hall at the Beeches." And so we parted on the shady side of Pall Mall.

No day—no hour; but the chop of friendship, the warm plate of hospitality, are always to be met with at the Beeches.

So I love dropping in to dine at the Beeches.

The dust of law has got into my lungs, the ashes of equity have settled somewhere in my throat; my friends are flitting to their moors or their yachts, to Paris or to Baden; London is left to the police and to the sparrows. Where shall I dine?

Where? Why, of course—can I hesitate? A return-ticket down the London and Shatterham as far as Sellinglem will lighten my purse of half-a-crown. *Eh, bien! après?* Could I get the chop that awaits me for that sum, including the fee to the hireling churl who elsewhere would retard its hissing progress from the gridiron?

Not I. You little know, barbarian outsiders, what it is to take pot-luck where I am bound. The chop is but figurative. His is open house. His wife is as hospitably inclined as himself; and, were the cook and kitchen-wench hopelessly incapable, they would turn out between them, he and his wife, a soup of herbs, a cutlet, and a sweet omelette, which the Three Brothers in the Palais Royal might envy.

I am very partial to the dinners at the Beeches.

Will you have the truth, O unbelievers? My eyes do not glisten o'er the unsophisticated chop. The plain potato, however mealy, sticks in my throat. The result of burnt malt imbibed is an intense desire to take the taste thereof out of my mouth.

Seeing the steak I am about to eat fingered by a flabby fellow-creature, dabbed on to a gigantic gridiron before my eyes, and grilled over a raging furnace, throws no halo round my solitary meal, brings no poetry to my hungry soul, but in fact makes me rather wish I had gone elsewhere to dine.

At Grinder's, too, a friendly chop is more often rendered by the next day's cold shoulder, or the third day's hash. Grinder's better half (she gives no quarter to G.) adds a blessing which effectually forbids a recurrence to his indefinite hospitality. But at the Beeches! The cook has eighty pounds a year! The friendly chop begins with the luscious Whitstable; proclaims the advent of the *potage bisque*, in whose red sea the dainty prawn vies with the succulent crawfish.

The friendly chop suggests the epigram of lamb, and gives force to the points of asparagus; and in this autumn season, when wings whirr over the ferns and fall quivering into the heather, the friendly chop expands into the juicy grouse, with feathered toes turned up, bathing in its own gravy.

And is there not music, too, to flatter the finest ear? The music of Chablis, of Clos Vougeot, and of Perier-Jouet, with a running accompaniment of *Vino di Pasto*, which would make an abbot wink from the soles of his sandals to the roots of his tonsured crown.

The friendly chop means art too; for are not those nectarines a picture? What maiden's cheek has lent the bloom to those peaches? And, O, happy, thrice happy is the man who has a friend who has a butler who has the art to warm his claret so tenderly.

So do I love dropping in to dine at the Beeches.

The white tie is faultless. The gloves, twice cleaned, are virgin still. You see I might make myself agreeable to the daughters, or to a daughter, at the Beeches; and though the chop is friendly, the toilette must not be too familiar.

The ticket is taken. Sellengem is reached without even running off the rails.

The lane is turned which conducts me to the lodge that beckons the guest to the hospitality attending him within the gates; the gates are passed, the bell is rung, the goal is attained; the chop of friendship is already seething at the fire of hospitality.

Take my hat and coat—

"*Master and Missus have taken the young ladies down to Brighton. Master's dinner-party were the night before last, sir.*"

And there is no train up till a quarter-past twelve. Why couldn't he ask me to his dinner-party? Confound him!

How pleasant it is dropping in to dine at the Beeches!

THE IRON CASKET

A Tale of the *Trabaux Forcés*

IN THREE PARTS

PART THE SECOND

‘I HEARD but rarely from Corandeuil after I left my native village, and the impression of the terrible circumstances which had for a time diverted my life from the commonplace course in which it had run from the time of my childhood rapidly faded away amid the new scenes which surrounded me. I was a good workman, and I had a taste for my trade. I got on well with my employers and my fellows; I had begun to think little of all that had passed, in comparison with the greatness that awaited Aline; and yet only one year had gone by since Charles Comel had died at Brussels.

‘In the last month of that year my sister Aline was married to Count Eugène de Corandeuil. A short time afterwards she sent me a sum of money, with which I purchased a partnership in a locksmith’s business. A few months subsequent to Aline’s marriage I learned that Clémence had accepted the hand of old Jean Comel the intendant, and, despite his sixty years, appeared much pleased with her lot. I recognised my sister’s skill and dexterity in this marriage. Clémence knew a portion of her secret, but was in complete error as to its real significance. It was expedient to remove her as much as possible from close contact with herself, and from the observation of Eugène de Corandeuil; while at the same time it was indispensable to secure her interests. Comel was well off for his condition in life. Clémence had outlived her *première jeunesse*. The arrangement was decidedly a wise one; and yet, when I heard of the marriage, an inexplicable presentiment of evil to arise from it seized upon me. But I soon forgot it.

‘The Countess de Corandeuil wrote to me, not very often indeed, and always cautiously, but I knew how things were going on at the château. I knew that Aline, having captured the position by force of her beauty and her skill, held and fortified it by the same charms, with the addition of a dazzling wit and an irresistible will. I knew that she had unquestioned sway over her husband, and all his opinions and actions. I knew that Isabelle de Corandeuil had pardoned the *mésalliance*, which was after all a very vague idea to her, in her blindness, and dearly loved the sister-in-law, so haughty, yet so winning to all others, so full of gentle consideration and sweet *provident* care for her. I knew that Comel’s avarice had not decreased since

his marriage, but that Aline's generosity to Clémence prevented her being a sufferer by her husband's failing. I did *not* know that Aline was happy. I did *not* know that her success had brought content with it. Her letters told me of constant application to such studies as would best fit her for her position in the great world; of the development of many tastes and talents which might have lain dormant for ever, had she remained the village girl she was born. She said nothing of retrospection, sentiment, or anticipation; and she was right; it was better so. In the third year of Aline's marriage I learned one thing more. A little more than a year after the night when the nameless infant had expired on my breast, Aline had given birth to a son. She told me sometimes, briefly, of her boy; and when he was just two years old I got a letter from her containing these words:

"My brother, my child is dead. His nurse, with Clémence and Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, had taken him to the ruined mill. Isabelle was weary, and seated herself upon one of the fallen stones which lie beside the river. My child was in her arms, looking and laughing at the rushing water, when, with a joyous cry, 'as if some one called him,' the poor terrified nurse told me, he sprang from her hold and fell into the river. The sightless creature screamed aloud in her helpless agony and fear, and several men came running to the spot where my boy had disappeared. But the river is deep and strong there, and it carries its burdens swiftly to the sea. The body of the child has never been found. My husband, torn with grief himself, is full of compassion for mine. He is not so strong as I am, and he cannot endure the sight of the place *which is, and yet is not, the grave of his child.* I have endured the sight of it too long to be impatient of it now; but enough of that. We are coming to Paris; then I shall see you."

'The Count and Countess de Corandeuil came to Paris, to the gloomy old hotel in the Faubourg, which had rarely hailed as its mistress so beautiful a woman as my lowly-born sister. Comel and Clémence had preceded them, and had prepared an establishment for them. Every servant in the Paris household was a stranger; not one, save Comel and Clémence, under the Countess's roof, knew that the thriving locksmith of the Rue T——, a constant visitor to the *intendant* and his wife, was their mistress's brother. I saw Aline, and I marvelled at her grace and beauty. The stately simplicity of her manners, and the grave richness and propriety of her dress, matched well with that superb, accurate, and defined beauty, whose perfection was marred only by the slight knitting of the lofty brow, and a paler hue upon the lips than their full proud curves demanded. I saw her alone, but she never loosed the rein which she held upon her feelings; perfectly kind, warmly interested in all my interests, she never spoke of herself except in the most casual manner. Her relations with her husband, she told me, were those of perfect affection and apparently boundless confidence, and the *aplomb* and skill with which she administered his

deadly animosity which actuates people who are the proverbial result of the dearest friend's quarrel given or expected. It is war to the death between Sir William Mansfield and his Aide-de-Camp. A personal encounter of some kind would have been inevitable. As it was, a violent scene took place between the two Aide-de-Camp; nor could the latter resist a challenge offered to horse-whip a hostile witness.

In illustration of the intimate relationship of these quarrels, I may mention that the hill stations once told me that he had "grass-widows" neglecting to pay their bills, and "grass-widowers" in the plains for not being "mittances." These ladies can apparently be "grass-widowers," I suppose—in the absence of the complaint made was, that whenever my friend's bill was always received a pretty little note from the lady saying that as he had been so *unkind* as to neglect to lend her the money to meet the claim; it would not help it, &c. With responsibilities like these, hill station becomes a post of danger as well as a post of duty.

The mention of "grass-widows" brings me to the Hill Scandals. The separation of husbands and wives, the one wants health, and the other wants money, is only for the reason that the experiment of living without one another may be attended with success. It must be admitted that we have not had any serious consequences arising from this cause; and our experiments are ways not only expedite, but lessen the fatality of married people—whether in health or not—though condemned to be apart for a time. The position in question has at least been successful, and must be irreproachable in the eyes of the Viceregal Court. It is the fashion in India in all high places; and it is to prevent people from being out of the Viceregal Court (who always says more than she means) that the Viceregal clergyman is always telling us that it is not the fashion. I think that up here it is difficult to get at Simla. I promised to make some more of this remark will do instead.

woman of thirty-five, of a timid and submissive, and, I had always believed, dutiful disposition. She was small and slight, and her features, though regular and pretty, did not possess distinction. She was a favourable specimen of her class, but, unlike Aline, would never have been mistaken for belonging to a higher. The claims of my business prevented my being able to visit Comel at any time but in the evening, and his life must have been dreary enough during the day, when Clémence was busy with her blind mistress.

'One night, when Comel and I were playing drowsily at dominoes, a large parcel of books was brought into the room by the concierge. "For mademoiselle," said the fellow curtly, and went his way. "I suppose Clémence reads a great deal to mademoiselle," I remarked. "Yes," said Comel, "the reading begins as soon as the déjeûner is over, and lasts all the afternoon." I remembered the long readings which had educated Aline, and felt glad the afflicted lady still retained her former pleasure in books. A few minutes later Clémence came into the room, and I took my leave.

'On an evening in the early summer, when even the grim Faubourg looked happy, and the blighted garden of the old hotel gay, I found an unknown visitor in Comel's room. He was a tall, swart, black-eyed, black-bearded man, of about thirty-seven years old, of a military carriage, and an undaunted, even audacious air. Clémence, who did not leave us so soon as usual, introduced him to me by the name of Deligny, and added in a whisper, "A comrade of poor Charles. The same who brought his letter from Brussels." Deligny was a brisk, pleasant talker, and the adventurous nature of his earlier life supplied him with material wherewith to fill up the evening hours agreeably. I concluded that he recognised me, though I retained no recollection of him, and that he was acquainted with the family history; but I did not gain any confirmation of my supposition from any thing he said; indeed, the only comment he made, in my presence, upon his former brief acquaintance with Comel, was in the remark that his informant at Corandeuil, from whom he had obtained the Count's address at Paris, had not prepared him to recognise in Madame Comel the Mademoiselle Clémence whom he had formerly seen at the château. It chanced about this time that I was very busy, and my trade was thriving, so that I had less time to give to Jean Comel; but on the rare occasions of my visits I always found that Deligny had either been at the hotel the same evening, or was expected; at all events that he had rapidly established an intimacy with Comel, and was as welcome a visitor as myself. By degrees I noticed that I saw less and less of Clémence, and that when she did not entirely avoid my presence, there was evident embarrassment and restraint in her manner.

'I was a clever locksmith, and I bore a good character; therefore it was no very remarkable circumstance that I was sent for, one day late in June, to make an alteration in the lock of a banker's safe, of which

the key had been either lost or stolen; and which it was necessary should be immediately put beyond the risk of violation by a change in the disposition of the lock. This was not a remarkable circumstance—but my business led to a part of Paris whither I seldom went, and that led to a discovery which occasioned me surprise and uneasiness. Glancing around, with the awakened curiosity induced by a scene comparatively novel, my eye lighted on the figures of a man and a woman, walking slowly, in close and eager conversation. They were Clémence Comel and Achille Deligny. The hour was that at which Clémence was understood to be always engaged in reading to Isabelle de Corandeuil. Of course I drew from this circumstance the conclusion which lay upon its surface; a conclusion not honourable to Clémence, and far from flattering to Comel; and there, it seemed, the matter might have ended. I was not a person to entertain, nor was Paris a place to inspire, any scruples on such a point, and my sentiments would probably have confined themselves to a sarcastic reflection on the folly of so disproportionate a marriage as that of Comel and Clémence, and a hope that “the old fool might not find her out”—had not an indefinable instinct warned me that under this incident lurked danger to Aline.

‘Impelled by curiosity I went that evening to the old hotel in the Faubourg, and finding Clémence and Deligny both present, I told Comel of my expedition of the morning, mentioning with some emphasis the hour at which I had passed through the Rue des Augustins. A fleeting glance, less of apprehension than of mutual congratulation, was exchanged between Clémence and Deligny, and I turned the conversation easily into another channel.

‘A fortnight passed away, and nothing of any importance transpired, until the occurrence of a general holiday permitted me to close my shop, and dispose of myself as I pleased for the afternoon. I had not seen Comel for some days, and I determined my first hour of liberty should be bestowed upon the old man. I found him alone, very querulous and complaining, and, for the first time, he spoke to me of his affairs. He told me that his savings had now reached a considerable amount, and that he was desirous of lodging them in a bank. My surprise was great at learning that this had not yet been done, and when I expressed it, he told me that his own invalid condition, and his reluctance to admit any second person to a knowledge of his affairs, had caused the delay. “I am waiting till I am well enough to get about,” he said; “but if that time does not come soon, Antoine, you must take the money to the bank for me.” I told him I would do so, and cheered him up with some words of course, relative to his health. An unusual seriousness sat on the old man’s features, as he spoke of the careful frugality of his past life, and his honest, if hard, attention to the interests of his employers. This seriousness gave place to a weird exultation as he said, “I will tell you all I possess, Antoine, and *where the sums are deposited*. I mean to make a will very soon, and

the share that should have been Charles's shall be yours." I started at the easy mention of the name so long unspoken by him, so long unheard by me; but he did not notice the movement, and went on. "I will leave some to Clémence, not so much as I once would have done, because—no, never mind; but you shall have Charles's share—you shall have Charles's share." What was in his mind?—did he suspect Clémence of treachery towards him? or did he merely calculate upon the probable event of her second marriage? I did not know, I have never known. "Listen," he said, "and take a pencil and write down what I say, that when I am dead, and they send to seek you, you may know where all my money is." Here he evidently forgot what he had previously said about placing the money in a bank. I thought it better to await a more favourable occasion for recurring to that, and therefore I obeyed, and made from his dictation the following memoranda:

"In the rosewood bureau, 5,000 francs, gold. In the desk which stood in the intendant's room at Corandeuil, 4,000 francs, notes.

"In the lining of the gray *robe de chambre* 5,000 francs, in notes.

"In a strong box marked '*Intendance*,' in the safe, 8,000 fr. gold."

As I wrote the last line of these memoranda, I chanced to look round, and noticed that the door of the room in which we were sitting was slightly open. I fancied that I had a peculiarly distinct recollection of having shut it on my arrival, and was on the point of remarking the circumstance, when I fortunately remembered that I might causelessly and seriously alarm the old man. I therefore merely said, "Where is Clémence?" "With mademoiselle, as usual," replied Jean Comel; and I left him without further remark.

Early on the following day, I was surprised by the appearance of Clémence at my workshop. Her manner was flurried and agitated, and her colour varied as she explained the cause of her visit.

"Comel has had a letter from the Countess," she said, "and she has sent him some directions which he makes a great mystery about." She said this in a tone in which my apprehensive ear discerned the faintest possible whisper of menace, combined with undisguised discontent. "You are to come to the hotel at once."

"I will go back with you then, madame," I answered.

"No; I will return alone. I—I have something to do."

She waved her hand hurriedly and left me; and with an indescribable sinking of the heart I prepared to follow her. As I turned into the gloomy street in which the hotel stood, Achille Deligny passed me, coming from the house.

I found Jean Comel alone, and looking ill, querulous, and nervous. He did not enter on the business for which he had summoned me at once, but began to complain that Clémence had been asking him for money and prying into his affairs. The old man seemed half frightened and half angry. His hearing had always been particularly acute, and I was not inclined to set the impression down to fancy, when he told

me he had heard steps in the room overhead during Clémence's absence; but on summoning the servants, found they had not entered those rooms, which, they had added, were, as M. Comel knew, always kept locked now. I thought I could have accounted for the steps; but I did not say so. I only endeavoured to soothe the old man, and restore him to composure.

"You must take the money to the bank, Antoine," he said, recurring to his former proposition, as if there had been no interval of time since he had first made it, "as soon as we have time to undo my *robe de chambre* and take it out, for it must all go together.

'There was a growing senility about his manner—a frequent repetition of a sentence, a maundering tone, a droop of the lip and eyelid—which suggested to me, that life was closing rapidly for the poor old man. I determined to tell Clémence my opinion on the earliest opportunity, and to urge her to care and dutifulness for the short remainder of the time during which he could claim them. Then I asked him what was the business on which he had sent for me. It was briefly this: A short time after Aline's marriage, Mademoiselle de Corandeuil had presented to her the jewels which had been bequeathed to her by her mother, and which were, of course, useless to her in her life of seclusion. These jewels Aline had not taken to England, as she was in deep mourning for her child. She had now written to Comel, saying, that as the absence of herself and the Count was likely to be prolonged, and as she should attend the English court after a time, she required her jewels, which her friend, Madame Delasborde, would take to her. She gave minute directions respecting the articles to be sent, also her friend's address, and concluded thus: "I do not wish them to be sent to Madame Delasborde in the box which at present contains them; so you will get Antoine to pick the lock carefully (I have the key here), and transfer them to an equally safe but smaller receptacle. Let him then carefully preserve the box with its remaining contents for me; and remember, I wish *no one* to know of the directions I give you. It is useless that any one should learn the whereabouts of the jewels."

"Madame la Comtesse has become very suspicious all in a minute," growled old Comel. "Of course I am not going to tell any body about the diamonds; but I can't see the good of changing them from one box to another—can you?"

"Certainly not," I said; "nor the good of picking the lock in order to do it. We must not send the box, I suppose; but I shall make a new key, and then I can re-close the box and put it in the safe, and keep the key myself, instead of keeping the box; so I will go and get some wax, and take the impression of the lock at once. And by the way," I said, smiling, "you had better give me the Countess's letter, lest any accident should befall it."

'The sudden and unreasonable anger with which Comel heard my

proposition was another symptom of the rapid breaking-up which I saw he was undergoing.

"I shall do nothing of the sort," he said. "I have not been intendant of Corandeuil for so many years, to be told that I cannot be trusted not to show a letter."

'I went away in an uneasy state of mind—uneasy at Comel's evident decline, and uneasy about Clémence. I returned with all possible rapidity, but not until two or three hours had elapsed, and then I found Jean Comel in a heavy sleep. I summoned Clémence and the servants, told them I thought this slumber looked like illness, and questioned them closely upon his usual habits. He had not quitted the apartment in my absence, and had merely taken the *bouillon* always served to him at that hour of the day. After some time, and many efforts, I succeeded in rousing him, and at length, having sent away the others, I made the old man understand the purpose with which I was there. He handed me the key of the safe, which I opened, and took from its recesses a heavy but small chased iron casket, which I could remember having seen, when a child, standing on the *guéridon* in the dressing-room of the former Countess of Corandeuil. I carefully took off the impression of the lock in wax, replaced the casket, and having fastened the bolts and locks of the safe, gave the key once more to the old man, bade him farewell, and went in search of Clémence. She was not to be found. I sent a servant to inquire if she was in Mademoiselle de Corandeuil's apartments; but received an answer in the negative. While I waited for the servant's return, I fancied I heard a step overhead in the dismantled apartment of the Count. I examined the door which opened into the corridor closely; it was locked, and the key withdrawn. Having learned that Clémence was not with Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, and that the concierge had not seen her pass out, I went round through a bye-street to the back of the hotel, and carefully examined such of the windows as were within view. The *contrevents* of all the unused apartments were closely shut. While thus engaged, I noticed for the first time, that a small iron gate was inserted in the garden wall, near the angle at which it was joined by Mademoiselle de Corandeuil's apartments. This gate opened into the dark and narrow street which lay at the back of the hotel. I touched the gate; it was open. Here then was the explanation of Clémence's absence: of course she could go out unseen by the concierge: of course, also, Deligny could come in, for there were no watchers to be feared, the only windows he would have to pass before being those of the apartment whose gentle tenant was blind.

'I went home troubled and perplexed, but firmly determined to seek an explanation with Clémence on the following day. This had become a necessity for my sister's sake and for Jean Comel's.

'I made the key, working at it when alone next day, and on the following evening I went to the Count's hotel. The summer was in its full splendour now; and, troubled and uneasy as I was, I enjoyed the calm,

rich, glowing beauty of the evening. It seemed to me as if I then saw all familiar objects far more distinctly than usual, and also that I perceived many which I had never before noticed. As I neared my destination, some impulse made me turn my steps into the narrow street. I drew near the little iron gate, and looked in. It wanted fully two hours to the long-tarrying darkness of a summer's evening, and yet a tall candle was burning close to one of the windows of the blind lady's apartment. It was impossible to mistake the meaning of this circumstance, impossible to doubt that the light was a signal placed there by Clémence, to be interpreted by Deligny.

‘Clémence was in the room with Comel when I entered it. The old man was half-slumbering in his chair ; his face looked wan and wasted in the evening light. On Clémence's pale cheeks I discerned the traces of tears ; and the movement of her hands as she busied herself with her needlework was tremulous.

“I am come on particular business to your husband, madame,” I said, “and I must beg you to leave us.”

‘She looked at me, and, I suppose, something in my tone roused her anger to an extent that set her prudence at defiance, for she replied :

“I know your business with my husband, Antoine Leroux, and I know there is a key to madame's jewel-box in your pocket. She has been very cautious with me ; it is a pity she did not begin to be so sooner,”—up to this point she had spoken excitedly, but now, with a side-glance at Comel, she dropped her voice to a hissing whisper, as she said,—“then she would not have left *one* of her valuables in my charge.”

“What do you mean ?” I said, questioning her strange manner rather than her words.

“O, don't you know ? *Only a pawn-ticket*,” she said ; and she swept angrily away.

‘I roused Jean Comel up ; and we proceeded to open the safe and the casket, and to take out the jewels, which we transferred to an ordinary jewel-box. To my surprise, remembering my sister's instructions, I found nothing of importance in the box when the gems had been removed ; nothing at all, indeed, but a rough bracelet made of dried berries, such as I remembered we had been used to make when we were children, and which lay on the white paper that lined the bottom of the box.

“Well, M. Comel,” I said, “there is nothing of any value here, and my pains in making the key are thrown away. The Countess must have been mistaken about the contents of the box ; and now when are we to send the jewels ?”

‘As I spoke, a servant knocked at the door, and informed Comel that Madame Delasborde desired to speak with him, but declined to leave her carriage.

“What a fortunate coincidence, M. Comel !” I said. “This saves us *all* trouble about the jewels. She has come for them, no doubt. I

suppose Madame Delasborde is an old friend of the Countess? You have seen her before?"

"No, I have not," he answered gruffly. "Do you think I have nothing to do but look after the Countess's grand visitors? I know her name, that's all. I told you so yesterday."

'He had not told me any thing of the kind; but I did not contradict him about such a trifle in his querulous humour. He told the man to give him his arm to the porte-cochère, and limped slowly out, Auguste giving a backward glance at the open doors of the safe, somewhat wondering, no doubt, that I was left alone in the apartment. The expression of the man's face made me smile. I remembered that he did not know I was the brother of his mistress. I thought, strangely enough, that no one knew me in that relation but Comel and Clémence, and, I supposed, Deligny; and then, but without any bitterness or regret, I thought of the vast gulf which lay between Aline's fortunes and mine. Her fortunes! Ah, if any thing should harm, should even endanger them!

'As I thought thus, Comel came back and told me Madame Delasborde had come for the jewels. She produced an order for them in Aline's handwriting, and a receipt in her own. I carried the casket to the porte-cochère, delivered it into the hands of an elegant lady, who sat in a fine carriage, and saw her drive away with her valuable charge.

"You have locked the safe, of course, M. Comel?" I said, as I arranged the dominoes for our invariable recreation.

"Of course I have," he said, shortly and angrily.

'Presently Clémence came in, with traces of tears on her cheeks and a sullen expression lowering upon her features. She sat down beside her husband's chair, but did not speak. Our game passed almost in silence. Occasionally Comel nodded and slumbered; but invariably, when I attempted to arouse him, and to direct his attention to the dominoes, he answered me angrily. The strange mixture of semi-stupefaction and irritability in all his manner impressed me seriously.

'After our game had lasted for some time, and while Comel was in one of his fitful sleeps, Auguste came to Clémence, and said that there was a person at the concierge's lodge inquiring for M. Deligny, and that the person said he had called at his lodgings, and had been referred to Comel for information.

"M. Deligny has left Paris for a month," said Clémence abruptly, without raising her eyes. Auguste left the room, and our dreary game went on for a little, until old Comel again sank into a semi-slumber.

"Clémence," I said cautiously, and in as kind a tone as I could assume, "I have something to say to you, which, for the sake of old times, you must hear. You will not refuse me, I know. After Comel has retired, may I speak with you?"

'She did not reply for a moment, but then answered, in a restrained whisper, rendered almost needless by the old man's sleep:

"How can I? You know Comel sleeps in the alcove there; and there is no room open but this, and the next, which is mine."

"Clémence," I said, "dear Clémence, do not fear me. What I have to say to you, I have to say in the interest of us all. Let me see you by the same means as those another uses. It is better the concierge and the servants should know nothing of my presence here at an unusual hour. Let me come *as he comes*, through the little garden-gate,"—she started, and her work fell from her hands,—“through the glass-door into the passage beside mademoiselle’s rooms; and let me wait for you in Aline’s dressing-room.”

"My God!" she said, "all is then discovered!"

"There was something terrible in the agony of this exclamation, uttered, as it was, in the lowest whisper.

"No, Clémence," I said, "nothing is discovered; only I know somewhat and divine more. Have no fear of me; I will help, not injure you. Hush! Comel wakes."

"I rattled the dominoes. Once more the old man lent a feeble attention to the game. Clémence withdrew to her attendance on Isabelle de Corandeuil; and at the usual hour I took my leave, exchanging a gruff good-night with the concierge, as he responded by a growl and a lusty pull to my "cordon, s'il vous plait."

"I wandered for an hour through the quiet streets, always quiet in that gloomy quarter, trying to arrange in my mind the order of the coming interview; but in vain. My thoughts were wayward, and took their own rambling, desultory course. Now they rambled off to some trifling circumstance of our childhood, some little joy or sorrow which had befallen Aline and me; again to some incident of my business, or my pleasures in Paris; but I could not keep my attention fixed for five minutes together on the serious events of the past, or the serious aspects of the present. At last, when midnight had sounded on all sides of me, and when the beautiful summer moon was shining benignly on my path, I turned and sought the little gate through which I was to approach what I felt must be a painful and momentous interview. The narrow street was dark and empty, as I glanced around, before I opened the gate. The next moment I had passed through it and the glass door, and Clémence was guiding me noiselessly towards my sister's room. We entered the apartment, and she softly shut the door, and then withdrew the shade of a small lantern which she carried, and set the light upon the floor in a corner, cautiously heeding the possibility of a gleam being seen through any chink in the window-shutters. How grim and ghastly the old-fashioned chamber looked, with its swathed furniture, and muffled hangings, and dim ceiling covered with portraits of an entire Olympus of dishevelled gods and goddesses, mere lumps of dingy colour in the mean futile glimmer of the lantern! How indistinct all these things were; and yet how distinctly I saw them, *how distinctly* I see them still! I sat down on a high old-fashioned

caresse, and gently placed Clémence beside me. She was very pale, and a perceptible tremor shook her.

"Clémence," I said, "you are in the power of a bad and dangerous man. I don't speak to you of this only because his power over you may endanger, if indeed it has not endangered, my sister's peace. You and I have exchanged no confidences; but each knows the secret that is in the possession of the other. Let us then talk of this, before we speak of your own position." (In every word I said I kept before me the remembrance of the mistaken impression on Clémence's mind relative to the paternity of Aline's child, and her entire ignorance of the infant's death. I bitterly regretted now that she had not been informed of the latter circumstance; there was none of that *air dévoté* about Madame Comel which had made Clémence Dervaux redoubtable.) "Tell me the truth, Clémence," I said; "have you betrayed Aline to Deligny?"

"I have, Antoine," the unhappy woman said slowly; "I have betrayed her; I have betrayed her, and my husband, and myself, and my God. That man knows your sister's secret; but O, Antoine, he cannot harm her; to whom can his voice reach, except to those of his own class? What danger is there that he can ever tell to any one who knows them, that the Count and Countess de Corandeuil are the parents of No. 608 among the *enfants trouvés* at L—? I don't know what madness made me tell him, Antoine, and I know you cannot forgive me, and that Aline will not forgive me; neither ought she, for no treachery can be blacker than mine; but men can make us do any thing, whether it be good or evil, while we love them, and he wrung this from me, as he has wrung every thing from me that he has wanted to know."

"And what has he wanted to know, Clémence, besides poor Aline's sad secret?" I asked, passing over her self-reproach, and the *past* tense in which she spoke of her love for Deligny, without comment, but taking careful note of both.

"Every thing that could help him to gain his wicked ends," she continued, in a voice almost breathless with agitation and anger; "he does not try to hide any of his wickedness from me now; he does not care, he does not think it worth his while. Why should he? I was fool enough to let him dupe me; why should he not be clever enough to dupe me still? But if we women are blind for a time—when we see, we see—and there is no blinding us twice. He blinded me, Antoine, by that pretence which seldom fails to deceive a woman, but, once unmasked, is her protection against all future deceit. He blinded me by professions of love; but he forgot that jealousy follows in the train of such persuasion, and I have watched him, and found him out. Suspicion is in my nature, Antoine; I loved him; but the more I loved him, the less I trusted him; and I found him out. When he has succeeded in robbing Comel, and me, and the Countess *too*, or when the old man is dead, if he makes

up his mind to wait so long, and then take his chance of wringing his money out of me, I shall be thrown aside. I am now slighted, though such treatment is hardly safe or prudent; and the woman whom he prefers to me, and always has preferred to me, with whom, perhaps he concocted his scheme for my ruin, will profit by it all."

"I let her go on unchecked. Such was the vehemence of her passion, the absolute need she felt of giving it expression, that she did not see that I had not led her on to this revelation—that she did not perceive the strange and unexplained confidence which had so suddenly succeeded to her studied avoidance of me.

"I tell you, Antoine Leroux," she said, "that man is a devil. When he came to Corandeuil, after Charles Comel's death, he heard from the neighbours, as he had heard in the first instance from his son, that Jean Comel was a rich man for his station; and his first idea was to get into Comel's favour, through his grief for Charles. But he found that Comel felt, or expressed, more resentment of his son's disobedience than regret for his death; and for the time he abandoned his design. At that time he saw me, and it was by my hands that he transmitted a letter from Charles to Aline. You know they had always been friends. I thought him inquisitive enough in the little I saw of him, but even then I liked him, and I had never forgotten him; when he suddenly made his appearance here one evening, shortly after the Count and Countess went to England. Time and the grave had long hidden all poor Charles's faults, and my husband received Deligny as an old friend. He is clever and amusing, as you know, and he never wearied of telling stories of the war, of the Emperor, and of Charles, to Comel, while he laid silent siege to me by every means in the power of a man determined to gain an important and valuable point. He succeeded only too well and too quickly, Antoine. My delusion was as complete as it was transient. I loved him with an infatuated love, and soon I had told him all I knew of Comel's affairs, and, alas! had betrayed the Countess's secret to him. His cold and impatient manner, his abrupt turning from any subject of interest personal to myself, and his fierce anger when I declared my utter inability to procure money for him from my husband, first began to undeceive me. He scoffed and sneered at my folly in having married an old man, and not long ago learned how to untie his purse-strings; and he then declared if he could not get money out of Comel, he would out of the Count. He forced me to give him the ticket of the *enfants trouvés*, and threatened to make M. de Corandeuil purchase it at a high price, or even, if he did not succeed in this rascally design, to claim the child in virtue of the ticket, and confront the Count and Countess with him."

"Clémence repeated the villain's dastardly threat in a tone which told of the horror with which it had inspired her. But what were the feelings with which I heard it? What was the terror with which I

learned the danger which had hung, which was still hanging, over my sister's head? If the revelation of the false secret involved so much, what would come of the revelation of the true secret? I did not try to disguise my emotion from Clémence, who interpreted it by the extent of her own knowledge, and continued:

"I have suffered much, Antoine, from the apprehension that he would fulfil this threat; and my avoidance of you when he has been present, and my successful efforts to render your meetings with him as few as possible, have had their origin in a dread that if he knew what confidence Comel places in you, his anger would make him the more bent on injuring Aline and the Count. I do not know how you discovered that he and I were in the habit of meeting in these rooms, nor does it matter; but he was here the other day, when you came to see Comel. I was out, not having been able to return at the time that I had appointed to see him. He heard your voice, bent down, and listened at the door of Comel's room, which he had contrived noiselessly to open. Comel was enumerating several sums of money, and the places in which they were deposited. You were writing them down from his dictation, and as he spoke, in order that you might do so, very distinctly, Deligny also made a memorandum of them. He feared to remain longer, lest he should be discovered; and when I joined him, he told me what he had heard, and declared that, but that he believed the old man to be near his end, he would not wait to succeed to the money through a marriage with me, but would secure it at once."

"I ascertained, from Clémence's disclosures, that the ruffian had not overheard the previous portion of the conversation between Comel and myself, and that he counted confidently on her inheriting the whole of the old man's fortune. A moment's reflection enabled me, as I thought, to see my way out of this labyrinth. On Comel's death, Deligny, learning that Clémence had inherited only a comparatively small portion of his wealth, would relinquish all idea of marrying her, and turn his revengeful schemes upon me, the cause of his disappointment. I might then purchase his silence by the sacrifice of a portion of my inheritance, and so secure Aline against all danger. As I thought thus, Clémence continued, with less vehemence than before, but in a tone of sadness and of fear, which deeply impressed me:

"He ordered me to keep him informed of any further meetings between you and Comel; and when, on the following morning, my husband sent me to ask you to come to him, I communicated my message to Deligny, who came to the end of the street with me. You may remember that I did not allow you to accompany me home."

"I do remember it," I said; "but I also remember that I met Deligny close to the hotel, evidently leaving it; so he cannot have played the eavesdropper again."

"Have you forgotten the little gate in the garden wall? He went

out at the porte-cochère, on purpose that you might see him, and then turned into the little street, and came into the hotel again by the little gate. Thus you would be convinced, as he wished you to be, that he was not in the house. I was not with Comel when you arrived; I was in the garden with Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, about to conduct her to her daily visit to the Church of the Carmes, and as I led her through the little gate, through which she always goes out, in preference to passing the porte-cochère, Achille Deligny approached, making me a sign to be silent, and passed into the garden. With the quick instinct of the blind, Mademoiselle de Corandeuil felt that some one had passed us, and expressed uneasiness. I pacified her with difficulty and very imperfectly, as I plainly perceived. She stayed an unusually long time in the church that day, and when at length we returned you were gone. I found Deligny in the Count's room, and his manner terrified me. He seized me by the arm when I entered the room, and spoke low and rapidly. 'Listen to me,' he said, 'and be as little of a fool as you can. Your husband has had a letter from the virtuous Countess de Corandeuil, and *that letter I must see*. He has shown it to her brother, but has refused—the old idiot—to intrust it to his care. I must see it, *and at once*; before Leroux's return; it is in the breast-pocket of the old man's robe-de-chambre, and you must get it for me; do you hear?' 'What do you want with a letter of the Countess's?' I said; but he only cursed my folly, and reiterated his command. 'I say *I must have it*,' he hissed; 'and if you do not get it for me at once, worse will come of it.' I left him, terrified, and with a heavy heart, and went to my husband's room. I tried every stratagem I could think of, to induce him to take off the robe-de-chambre, and failing that, to abstract the letter; but all was in vain. He was querulous, and vaguely suspicious of me, I suppose because, pressed and worried by Deligny, I had on some late occasions asked him for money; and I was obliged to return to Deligny, and tell him that all my efforts were fruitless. He was savagely angry at my failure and at the delay, and he desired me to bring him the bouillon always served to my husband at that hour. 'What are you going to do?' I asked him in an agony of fear; 'are you going to poison the old man?' 'Curse you for a fool and a hypocrite!' he said; 'you *must* affect such a suspicion—it could not be real, or it would be too idiotic even for *you*! No, I mean Comel to sleep for an hour or two, until I make the use which I require of the letter now in his pocket.' I suppose I still looked doubtful; for he said, 'Don't you see, that to poison the old man would be to do you the best service in my power; would be to rid you of your husband and your lover too? You would only have to denounce me to justice, and any little betrayal of your tender confidence into which I might be tempted would go for nothing under such circumstances. Tush, woman; do as I tell you, and do not trouble yourself to think.'

"I obeyed him; I brought the bouillon, into which he dropped a



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small quantity of fluid from a little bottle he carried about him. Comel grumbled and found fault with the bouillon, which, he said, tasted stale; became drowsy shortly after drinking it, and sunk into the heavy sleep in which you found him. I took the letter from his pocket as soon as I saw he was really asleep, and gave it to Deligny, who ordered me to leave the room, and locked the door after me, adjusting the key so that it would have been impossible for me to see what he was doing, had I watched him—a precaution which he sneeringly explained to me. The letter was in his possession when you returned; and when you questioned me about Comel's sleep, my fear was so great that nothing but my greater fear of Deligny kept me from telling you the truth. I did not dare to see you again, and hid myself in one of the dismantled rooms until you were gone.

“In the evening Deligny came as usual, and sat down to a game of dominos with Comel. The old man was still drowsy and heavy, and had probably forgotten all about the Countess's letter. He was dressed in his usual old-fashioned attire for the evening, and when Deligny handed me the paper, I had no difficulty in slipping it, unnoticed, into the pocket of the robe-de-chambre, hanging up within the alcove. I saw nothing of Deligny afterwards till this evening. I contrived to read Aline's letter before my husband locked it up in the safe, and I felt offended that its contents had been concealed from me. I think I sought a kind of refuge from my trouble and alarm by hardening my heart against her—by wishing that she might suffer, if not wrong, at least inquietude. I had sinned and was suffering; she had sinned, why should she not suffer also? You shudder, Antoine; you think she *has* suffered; you think the death of the little *vicomte* was a great punishment; and perhaps it was; but it did not take her name and her state from her; and I think Aline loved these best. All day I had nursed these angry feelings, and when you came I gave vent to them, as you remember. I had previously lighted a candle and placed it in mademoiselle's window, as a signal to Deligny that I could only see him at the gate this evening, for mademoiselle and Comel both needed my services, both being ailing; and when I left the room I went to the gate. He was close at hand, and was dressed warmly, as if for a journey. His tone had quite changed since the previous day; he was once more tender and affectionate to me, and told me, with many expressions of concern, that he was obliged to leave me for a month. The explanation he gave was, that an uncle of his had just died at Rouen, and he had been summoned for the affairs of the succession. He gave me an address, begged me to write to him, made a hurried apology for his conduct of the previous day, and left me almost stunned at the suddenness of his departure, yet sensibly relieved by it. His pretences can never deceive me again, though I feigned to accept his excuses and to believe his protestations. When men have made hypocrites of women, they are apt to forget that they may exercise

the art they have learned upon their teachers. A few hours only have passed, and yet I feel as if an entire age of peace had rolled over me. Antoine, I have been very guilty; but I am penitent. Do not think it is only because I have discovered the utter baseness of the man I loved; it is not quite so, though it may be mainly; no, I never had one happy hour in all my guilty joy. And now, Antoine, now there is breathing time; he is gone; let us take counsel together; tell me what there is to fear. Nothing till he returns. But what then? Can I not escape from him? Can I not get the Count's permission, and persuade Comel to return to Corandeuil? Deligny would not venture to follow me thither; he would know that detection of our relations must there be inevitable. No, he will wait till my husband's death before he again molests me, if, when he returns to Paris, he finds I have escaped him for the present."

"I remembered what relief it was in my power to give her, by telling her that she was not to be Comel's sole heir, and that I thought Deligny would hardly marry her to procure so small a sum, as that to which I felt sure I had it in my power to induce Comel to limit her inheritance. It would have been pleasant to tell her this; to tell her also, that she should be only nominally impoverished, and for her own protection; but it was better, safer, not to do so; I could not trust her discretion, and I did not wish to direct Deligny's rage against myself sooner than it needs must be so directed. I therefore kept silence on this point, and acquiesced in Clémence's view of the advisability of their quitting Paris. The danger was at least deferred by Deligny's absence;—as Clémence had said, it gave us breathing time.

"There was much that was exaggerated, I thought, in Clémence's fear of this man. My fear of him was based on Aline's interest only; but I could hardly understand Clémence's. I had sought this interview with her with the intention of placing before her my opinion of her husband's condition, of urging her to decent and proper care of him, and to such caution and prudence in the management of her *liaison* with Deligny as might preserve her afterwards from scandal, when the time should have arrived at which she would be enabled to marry her lover. To represent these things to her, and to discover exactly how much risk to Aline's true secret had been incurred by Clémence's revelation of her supposed secret,—this, and this only, had been my purpose; but now something additionally serious and sinister had been added to my apprehensions, though I was still far from sharing, or even understanding, Clémence's fears. Her jealousy, her anger, and her disenchantment I thoroughly comprehended.

"The subsiding of her excitement, finally quenched by a long fit of silent weeping, which I permitted her to indulge undisturbed, while I meditated upon all she had told me, enabled me to question her in detail upon Deligny's proceedings since their acquaintance had been renewed. I then discovered that she knew little or nothing of him

apart from the time he passed with her. He had given her a fluent and plausible account of his family and circumstances; but, of course, she had not had either inclination or means for its verification. The strong and painful impression on her mind was, that Deligny would possess himself of her husband's money by violent means, if his return found them still in Paris; and though I sought to allay this fear by pointing out to her that such an attempt must be hopeless, as he had, by his communications to her, made his detection inevitable, I could not succeed in appeasing it.

"What could he want with Aline's letter?" she asked; "I cannot understand that. Why did he remain shut up with it for hours? There must have been some strong reason; what is it?"

'Such were the questions she asked a score of times, and which I could only reiterate.

'To this mystery neither of us could find a clue. I turned the conversation away from these speculations, of which we could make nothing, to the topic of Comel's health. I told Clémence that I felt sure the old man was near his end; that I had seen many symptoms which induced me to believe that a fit of apoplexy or a stroke of paralysis was by no means an unlikely event in his case; I told her I would take the earliest possible opportunity of prevailing on Comel to transfer his boards to the safe keeping of a bank. Clémence listened to me intently, and grew calmer and more cheerful as I spoke. I believe the woman's sorrow for her sin was genuine and deep, and that the resolution she then formed of devoting herself to the pious task of soothing the old man's declining life was sincere and earnest. Through many long and weary years, father, it has been a great solace to me to remember and believe that.

'Many hours of the night wore away while the weeping woman and I discussed the subjects, in which we were so deeply interested, in all their bearings. The light of the lantern had been superseded by that of day long before we parted. When at length we bade each other farewell, it was at the little gate, which Clémence softly locked behind me. She stood grasping the iron bars with her hands, and with her pale and tear-stained face pressed against them, when I had passed out of the gate. She was still standing so when I turned, at the corner of the street, to look back at her.'



A SUNSET IDYL

I WAS gazing on the sunset,
Leaning on a rustic stile,
With a young and dainty maiden
Standing near me all the while.
We were under apple-blossoms,
Pearled with gleaming drops of rain,
And we heard the dreamy music
Of a brooklet in the lane.

And the dying sunset linger'd
Round this maiden queen of girls ;
Won a brightness from her glances,
Gave a sparkle to her curls.
Then I spoke of summer evenings,
And of rambles in the dells ;
But I only thought of wooing,
And the sound of marriage-bells.

And I dream'd of all the gladness
That a wedding-morn would bring,—
Of a round and rosy finger
Circled with a golden ring !
In the warm and purple distance,
Ivy-clasp'd, the church was seen ;
With the maiden there I'd wander'd,
Often there—in dreams—had been !

Midst the lilies and the lilacs,
In the summer's lustrous eves,
Have our whispers oft been mingled
With the fluttering of the leaves.
In such moments love and beauty
Fill the heart—there linger long ;
Like the charm for ever present
In the poet's sweetest song.

When no longer glow'd the sunset,
Still I leant upon the stile ;
And the maiden gave her promise—
Yes, her promise—with a smile:
Memory still turns to that sunset,
Of that evening fondly tells,
And the morning when we listen'd
To the sound of marriage-bells.





M. E. Edwards del.

E. Evans sc.

DIANA PAGET.

BELGRAVIA

JANUARY 1867

BIRDS OF PREY

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c

Book the Second

THE TWO MACAIRES

CHAPTER III. "HEART BARE, HEART HUNGRY, VERY POOR."

DIANA PAGET left the Kursaal, and walked slowly along the pretty rustic street; now dawdling before a little printshop whose contents she knew by heart, now looking back at the great windows of that temple of pleasure which she had just quitted.

"What do they care what becomes of *me*?" she thought, as she looked up at the blank vacant windows, for the last time before she left the main street of Forêtdechêne, and turned into a straggling side-street, whose rugged pavement sloped upward towards the pine-clad hills. The house in which Captain Paget had taken up his abode was a tall white habitation, situated in the narrowest of the narrow bye-ways that intersect the main street of the pretty Belgian watering-place; a lane in which the inhabitants of opposite houses may shake hands with one another out of the window, and where the odour of the cabbages and onions so liberally employed in the *cuisine* of the native offends the nose of the foreigner from sunrise to sunset.

Diana paused for a moment at the entrance to this lane, but, after a brief deliberation, walked onwards.

"What is the use of my going home?" she thought; "*they* won't be home for hours to come."

She walked slowly along the hilly street, and from the street into a narrow pathway winding upward through the pine-wood. Here she was quite alone, and the stillness of the place soothed her. She took off her hat and slung the faded ribbons across her arm; and the warm breeze lifted the loose hair from her forehead as she wandered upwards. It was a very beautiful face from which that loose dark hair was lifted by the summer wind. Diana Paget inherited something of the soft

loveliness of Mary Anne Kepp, and a little of the patrician beauty of the Pagets. The eyes were like those which had watched Horatio Paget on his bed of sickness in Tulliver's Terrace. The resolute curve of the thin flexible lips and the fine modelling of the chin were hereditary attributes of the Nugent Pagets; and a resemblance to the lower part of Miss Paget's face might have been traced in many a sombre portrait of dame and cavalier at Thorpehaven Manor; where a Nugent Paget, who acknowledged no kindred with the disreputable Captain, was now master.

The girl's reflections as she slowly climbed the hill were not pleasant. The thoughts of youth should be very beautiful; but youth that has been spent in the companionship of reprobates and tricksters is something worse than age; for experience has taught it to be bitter, while time has not taught it to be patient. For Diana Paget childhood had been joyless, and girlhood lonely. That blank and desolate region, that dreary flat of fenny waste ground between Vauxhall and Battersea, on which the child's eyes had first looked, had been typical of her loveless childhood. With her mother's death faded the one ray of light that had illumined her desolation. She was shifted from one nurse to another; and her nurses were not allowed to love her, for she remained with them as an encumbrance and a burden. It was so difficult for the Captain to pay the pitiful sum demanded for his daughter's support: or rather it was so much easier for him not to pay it. So there always came a time when Diana was delivered at her father's lodgings like a parcel, by an indignant nurse who proclaimed the story of her wrongs in shrill, feminine treble, and who was politely informed by the Captain that her claim was a common debt, and that she had the remedy in her own hands, but that the same code of laws which provided her with that remedy forbade any obnoxious demonstration of her anger in a gentleman's apartment. And then Miss Paget, after hearing all the tumult and discussion, would be left alone with her father, and would speedily perceive that her presence was disagreeable to him.

When she outgrew the age of humble foster-mothers and cottages in the dreariest of the outlying suburbs, the Captain sent his daughter to school: and on this occasion he determined on patronising a person whom he had once been too proud to remember among the list of his kindred. There are poor and straggling branches upon every family tree; and the Pagets of Thorpehaven had needy cousins who, in the mighty battle of life, were compelled to fight amongst the rank and file. One of these poor cousins was a Miss Priscilla Paget, who at an early age had exhibited that affection for intellectual pursuits and that carelessness as to the duties of the toilet which are supposed to distinguish the predestined blue-stocking. Left quite alone in the world, Priscilla put her educational capital to good use; and after holding the position of *principal* governess for nearly twenty years in a prosperous boarding-

school at Brompton, she followed her late employer to her grave with unaffected sorrow, and within a month of the funeral invested her savings in the purchase of the business, and established herself as mistress of the mansion.

To this lady Captain Paget confided his daughter's education; and in Priscilla Paget's house Diana found a shelter that was almost like a home, until her kinswoman became weary of promises that were never kept, and pitiful sums paid on account of a debt that grew bigger every day—very weary likewise of conciliatory hampers of game and barrels of oysters, and all the flimsy devices of a debtor who is practised in the varied arts of the gentlemanly swindler.

The day came when Miss Paget resolved to be rid of her profitless charge; and once more Diana found herself delivered like a parcel of unsorted goods at the door of her father's lodging. Those are precocious children who learn their first lessons in the school of poverty; and the girl had been vaguely conscious of the degradation involved in this process at the age of five. How much more keenly did she feel the shame at the age of fifteen! Priscilla did her best to lessen the pain of her pupil's departure.

"It isn't that I've any fault to find with you, Diana, though you must remember that I have heard some complaints of your temper," she said with gentle gravity; "but your father is too trying! If he didn't make me any promises, I should think better of him. If he told me frankly that he couldn't pay me, and asked me to keep you, out of charity——" Diana drew herself up with a little shiver at this word—"why, I might turn it over in my mind, and see if it could be done. But to be deceived time after time, as I've been deceived—you know the solemn language your father has used, Diana, for you've heard him; and to rely upon a sum of money on a certain date, as I have relied again and again, after Horatio's assurance that I might depend upon him—it's too bad, Diana; it's more than any one can endure. If you were two or three years older, and further advanced in your education, I might manage to do something for you by making you useful with the little ones; but I can't afford to keep you and clothe you during the next three years for nothing, and so I have no alternative but to send you home."

The "home" to which Diana Paget was taken upon this occasion was a lodging over a toyshop in the Westminster Road, where the Captain lived in considerable comfort on the proceeds of a Friendly and Philanthropic Loan Society.

But no very cordial welcome awaited Diana in the gaudily-furnished drawing-room over the toyshop. She found her father sleeping placidly in his easy-chair, while a young man, who was a stranger to her, sat at a table near the window writing letters. It was a dull November day—a very dreary day on which to find oneself thrown suddenly on a still drearier world; and in the Westminster-Bridge road the lamps

were already making yellow patches of sickly light amidst the afternoon fog.

The Captain twitched his silk handkerchief off his face with an impatient gesture as Diana entered the room.

"Now then, what is it?" he asked peevishly, without looking at the intruder.

He recognised her in the next moment; but that first impatient salutation was about as warm a welcome as any which Miss Paget received from her father. In sad and bitter truth, he did not care for her. His marriage with Mary Ann Kepp had been the one grateful impulse of his life; and even the sentiment which had prompted that marriage had been by no means free from the taint of selfishness. But he had been quite unprepared to find that this grand sacrifice of his life should involve another sacrifice in the maintenance of a daughter he did not want; and he was very much inclined to quarrel with the destiny that had given him this burden.

"If you had been a boy, I might have made you useful to me sooner or later," the Captain said to his daughter when he found himself alone with her late on the night of her return; "but what on earth am I to do with a daughter, in the unsettled life I lead? However, since that old harridan has sent you back, you must manage in the best way you can," concluded Captain Paget with a discontented sigh.

From this time Diana Paget had inhabited the nest of the vultures, and every day had brought its new lesson of trickery and falsehood. There are men—and bad men too—who would have tried to keep the secret of their shifts and meannesses hidden from an only child; but Horatio Paget believed himself the victim of man's ingratitude, and his misdoings the necessity of an evil destiny. It is not easy for the unsophisticated intellect to gauge those moral depths to which the man who lives by his wits must sink before his career is finished, or to understand how, with every step in the swindler's downward road, the conscience grows tougher, the perception of shame blunter, the savage selfishness of the animal nature stronger. Diana Paget had discovered some of her father's weaknesses during her miserable childhood; and in the days of her unpaid-for schooling she had known that his most solemn promises were no more to be relied on than the capricious breath of a summer breeze. So the revelations which awaited her under the paternal roof were not utterly strange or entirely unexpected. Day by day she grew more accustomed to that atmosphere of fraud and falsehood. The sense of shame never left her; for there is a pride that thrives amidst poverty and degradation, and of such pride Diana Paget possessed no small share. She writhed under the consciousness that she was the daughter of a man who had forfeited all right to the esteem of his fellow-men. She valued the good opinion of others, and would fain have been beloved and admired, trusted and respected; for

she was ambitious: and the thought that she might one day do something which should lift her above the vulgar level was the day-dream that had consoled her in many an hour of humiliation and discomfort. Diana Paget felt the Captain's shame as keenly as her mother had felt it; but the remorse which had agonised gentle Mary Anne, the tender compassion for others which had wrung that fond and faithful heart, had no place in the breast of the Captain's daughter.

Diana felt so much compassion for herself, that she had none left to bestow upon other people. Her father's victims might be miserable, but was not she infinitely more wretched? The landlady who found her apartments suddenly tenantless and her rent unpaid might complain of the hardness of her fortune; but was it not harder for Diana, with the sensitive feelings and the keen pride of the Pagets, to endure all the degradation involved in the stealthy carrying away of luggage and a secret departure under cover of night?

At first Miss Paget had been inclined to feel aggrieved by the presence of the young man whom she had seen writing letters in the gloomy dusk of the November afternoon; but in due time she came to accept him as a companion, and to feel that her joyless life would have been drearier without him. He was the secretary of the Friendly and Philanthropic Loan Society, and of any other society organised by the Captain. He was Captain Paget's amanuensis and representative: Captain Paget's tool, but not Captain Paget's dupe; for Valentine Hawkehurst was not of that stuff of which dupes are made.

The man who lives by his wits has need of a faithful friend and follower. The chief of the vultures must not be approached too easily. There must be a preparatory ordeal, an outer chamber to be passed, before the victim is introduced to the sanctuary which is irradiated by the silver veil of the prophet. Captain Paget found an able coadjutor in Valentine Hawkehurst, who answered one of those tempting advertisements in which A. B. C. or X. Y. Z. was wont to offer a salary of three hundred a-year to any gentlemanly person capable of performing the duties of secretary to a newly-established company. It was only after responding to this promising offer, that the applicant was informed that he must possess one indispensable qualification in the shape of a capital of five hundred pounds. Mr. Hawkehurst laughed aloud when the Captain imparted this condition with that suave and yet dignified manner which was peculiar to him.

"I ought to have known it was a dodge of that kind," said the young man coolly. "Those very good things—duties light and easy, hours from twelve to four, speedy advancement certain for a conscientious and gentlemanly person, and so on—are always of the genus *do*. Your advertisement is very cleverly worded, my dear sir; only it's like the rest of them, rather *too* clever. It is so difficult for a clever man not to be *too* clever. The prevailing weakness of the human intellect seems to me to be *exaggeration*. However, as I haven't a five-pound

note in the world, or the chance of getting one, I'll wish you good morning, Captain Paget."

There are people whose blood would have been turned to ice by the stony glare of indignation with which Horatio Paget regarded the man who had dared to question his probity. But Mr. Hawkehurst had done with strong impressions long before he met the Captain; and he listened to that gentleman's freezing reproof with an admiring smile. Out of this very unpromising beginning there arose a kind of friendship between the two men. Horatio Paget had for some time been in need of a clever tool; and in the young man whose cool insolence rose superior to his own dignity he perceived the very individual whom he had long been seeking. The young man who was unabashed by the indignation of a scion of Nugents and Cromies and Pagets must be utterly impervious to the sense of awe; and it was just such an impervious young man that the Captain wanted as his coadjutor. Thus arose the alliance, which grew stronger every day; until Valentine took up his abode under the roof of his employer and patron, and made himself more thoroughly at home there than the unwelcome daughter of the house.

The history of Valentine Hawkehurst's past existence was tolerably well known to the Captain; but the only history of the young man's early life ever heard by Diana was rather vague and fragmentary. She discovered, little by little, that he was the son of a spendthrift *littérateur*, who had passed the greater part of his career within the rules of the King's Bench; that he had run away from home at the age of fifteen, and had tried his fortune in all those professions which require no educational ordeal, and which seem to offer themselves invitingly to the scapegrace and adventurer. At fifteen Valentine Hawkehurst had been errand-boy in a newspaper office; at seventeen a penny-a-liner, whose flimsy was pretty sure of admission in the lower class of Sunday papers. In the course of a very brief career he had been a provincial actor, a manège rider in a circus, a billiard-marker, and a betting agent. It was after having exhausted these liberal professions that he encountered Captain Paget.

Such was the man whom Horatio Paget admitted to companionship with his only daughter. It can scarcely be pleaded in excuse for the Captain that he might have admitted a worse man than Valentine Hawkehurst to his family circle, for the Captain had never taken the trouble to sound the depths of his coadjutor's nature. There is nothing so short-sighted as selfishness; and beyond the narrow circle immediately surrounding himself, there was no man more blind than Horatio Paget.

It was dusk when Diana grew tired of the lonely pathways among *the hills*, where the harmonies of a band stationed in the valley were wafted in gusts of music by the fitful summer breeze. The loneliness

of the place soothed the girl's feverish spirits ; and, seated in a little classic temple upon the summit of a hill, she looked pensively downward through the purple mists at the newly-lighted lamps twinkling faintly in the valley.

"One does not feel the sting of one's shabbiness here," thought Miss Paget : "the trees are all dressed alike. Nature makes no distinction. It is only Fortune who treats her children unfairly."

The Captain's daughter walked slowly back to the little town in the deepening dusk. The lodging occupied by Horatio Paget and his household consisted of four roomy chambers on the second story of a big rambling house. The rooms were meanly furnished, and decorated with the tawdry ornamentation dear to the continental mind ; but there were long wide windows and an iron balcony, on which Diana Paget was often pleased to sit.

She found the sitting-room dark and empty. No dinner had been prepared ; for on lucky days the Captain and his protégé were wont to dine at the *table d'hôte* of one of the hotels or to feast sumptuously *à la carte*, while on unlucky days they did not dine at all. Diana found a roll and some cream cheese in a roomy old cupboard that was flavoured with mice ; and after making a very indifferent meal in the dusky chamber, she went out upon the balcony, and sat there looking down upon the lighted town.

She had been sitting there for nearly an hour in the same attitude, when the door of the sitting-room was opened, and a footstep sounded behind her. She knew the step ; and although she did not lift her head, her eyes took a new brightness in the summer dusk, and the listless grace of her attitude changed to a statuesque rigidity, though there was no change in the attitude itself.

She did not stir till a hand was laid softly on her shoulder, and a voice said,

"Diana !"

The speaker was Valentine Hawkehurst, the young man whose entrance to the golden temple had been so closely watched by Captain Paget's daughter.

She rose as he spoke, and turned to him.

"You have been losing, I suppose, Mr. Hawkehurst," she said, "or you would not have come home ?"

"I am compelled to admit that you are right in your premise, Miss Paget, and your deduction is scarcely worth discussion. I *have* been losing—confoundedly ; and as they don't give credit at the board of green cloth yonder, there was no excuse for my staying. Your father has not been holding his own within the last hour or two ; but when I left the rooms he was going to the Hotel d'Orange with some French fellows for a quiet game of *écarté*. Our friend the Captain is a great card, Miss Paget, and has a delightful talent for picking up distinguished acquaintance."

There are few daughters who would have cared to hear a father spoken of in this free-and-easy manner; but Diana Paget was quite unmoved. She had resumed her old attitude, and sat looking towards the lighted windows of the Kursaal, while Mr. Hawkehurst lounged against the angle of the window with his hands in his pockets and a cigar in his mouth.

For three years Valentine Hawkehurst had lived in constant companionship with the Captain's daughter; and in that time his manner to her had undergone considerable variation. Of late it had been something in the manner of an elder brother, whose fraternal breast is impervious to the influence of a sister's loveliness or a sister's fascination. If Diana Paget had been a snub-nosed young person with red hair and white eyelashes, Mr. Hawkehurst could scarcely have treated her with a more friendly indifference, a more brotherly familiarity.

Unhappily this line of conduct, which is perhaps the wisest and most honourable plan that a man can pursue when he finds himself thrown into a dangerously familiar association with a beautiful and unprotected woman, is the very line of proceeding which a beautiful woman can never bring herself to forgive. A chivalrous stiffness, a melancholy dignity, a frozen frigidity, which suggest the fiery bubbling of the lava flood beneath the icy surface,—these are delightful to the female mind. But friendly indifference and fraternal cordiality constitute the worst insult that can be offered to her beauty, the most bitter outrage upon the majesty of her sex.

"I suppose it will be midnight before papa comes home, Mr. Hawkehurst," Diana said abruptly, when her companion had finished his cigar, and had thrown the end of it over the balcony.

"Past midnight more likely, Miss Paget. May I ask how I have become Mr. Hawkehurst all of a sudden, when for the last three years I have been usually known as Valentine—or Val?"

The girl turned her head with a gesture in which the carelessness of his own manner was imitated. She stole a rapid look at him as she answered, "What does it matter whether I call you by one name or another?"

"What does any thing matter? I believe Mr. Toots was an unconscious philosopher. There is nothing in the world of any consequence, except money. Go and look at those poor devils yonder, and you will see what *that* is worth," he cried, pointing to the lighted Kursaal; "there you behold the one great truth of the universe in action. There is nothing but money, and men are the slaves of money, and life is only another name for the pursuit of money. Go and look at beauty yonder fading in the light and heat; at youth that changes to age before your eyes; at friendship which turns to hate when the chances of the game are with my friend and against me. The Kursaal is *the world* in little, Diana; and this great globe of ours is nothing but

a gigantic gaming-table—a mighty temple for the worship of the golden calf.”

“Why do you imitate those people yonder, if you despise them so heartily?”

“Because I am like them and of them. I tell you that money is the beginning and end of all things. Why am I here, and why is my life made up of baseness and lies? Because my father was an improvident scoundrel, and did not leave me five hundred a year. I wonder what I should have been like, by the by, if I had been blest with five hundred a year.”

“Honest and happy,” answered the girl earnestly. She forgot her simulated indifference, and looked at him with sad earnest eyes. He met the glance, and the expression of his own face changed from its cynical smile to a thoughtful sadness.

“Honest perhaps; and yet I almost doubt if any thing under five thousand a year would have kept me honest. Decidedly not happy; the men who can be happy on five hundred a year are made of a duller stuff than the clay which serves for a Hawkehurst.”

“You talk about not being happy with five hundred a year!” Diana exclaimed impatiently. “Surely any decent existence would be happiness to you compared to the miserable life you lead,—the shameful, degraded life which shuts you out of the society of respectable people and reduces you to the level of a thief. If you had any pride, Valentine, you would feel it as bitterly as I do.”

“But I haven’t any pride. As for my life,—well, I suppose it is shameful and degraded, and I know that it’s often miserable; but it suits me better than jog-trot respectability. I can dine one day upon truffled turkey and champagne, another day upon bread and cheese and small beer; but I couldn’t eat beef and mutton always. That’s what kills people of my temperament. There are born scamps in the world, Diana, and I am one of them. My name is Robert Macaire, and I was created for the life I lead. Keep clear of me if you have any hankering after better things; but don’t try to change my nature, for it is wasted labour.”

“Valentine, it is so cruel of you to talk like that.”

“Cruel to whom?”

“To—those—who care for you.”

It was quite dark now; but even in the darkness Diana Paget’s head drooped a little as she said this.

Mr. Hawkehurst laughed aloud.

“Those who care for me!” he cried; “no such people ever lived. My father was a drunken scoundrel, who suffered his children to grow up about him as he would have suffered a litter of puppies to sprawl upon his hearth, only because there was less trouble in letting them lie there than in kicking them out. My mother was a good woman in the beginning, I know; but she must have been something more

than a mortal woman if she had not lost some of her goodness in twelve years of such a life as she led with my father. I believe she was fond of me, poor soul; but she died six months before I ran away from a lodging in the Rules, which it is the bitterest irony to speak of as my home. Since then I have been Robert Macaire, and have about as many friends as such a man usually has."

"You can scarcely wonder if you have few friends," said Miss Paget, "since there is no one in the world whom you love."

She watched him through the darkness after saying this; watched him closely, though it was too dark for her to see the expression of his face, and any emotion to which her words might have given rise could be betrayed only by some gesture or change of attitude. She watched him in vain, for he did not stir. But after a pause of some minutes he said slowly—

"Such a man as I cannot afford to love any one. What have I to offer to the woman I might pretend to love? Truth, or honour, or honesty, or constancy? Those are commodities I have never dealt in. If I know what they are, and that I have never possessed them, it is about as much as I do know of them. If I have any redeeming grace, Diana Paget, it lies in the fact that I know what a worthless wretch I am. Your father thinks he is a great man, a noble suffering creature, and that the world has ill-used him. I know that I am a scoundrel, and that let my fellow-men treat me as badly as they please, they can never give me worse usage than I deserve. And am I a man to talk about love, or to ask a woman to share my life? Good God, what a noble partner I should offer her! what a happy existence I could assure her!"

"But if the woman loved you, she would only love you better for being unfortunate."

"Yes, if she was very young and foolish and romantic. But don't you think I should be a villain if I traded on her girlish folly? She would love me for a year or two perhaps, and bear all the changes of my temper; but the day would come when she would awake from her delusion, and know that she had been cheated. She would see other women—less gifted than herself, probably—and would see the market they had made of their charms; would see them rich and honoured and happy, and would stand aside in the muddy streets to be splashed by the dirt from their carriage-wheels. And then she would consider the price for which she had bartered her youth and her beauty, and would hate the man who had cheated her. No, Diana, I am not such a villain as the world may think me. I am down in the dirt myself, and I'm used to it. I won't drag a woman into the gutter just because I may happen to love her."

There was a long silence after this—a silence during which Diana Paget sat looking down at the twinkling lights of the Kursaal. *Valentine* lighted a second cigar and smoked it out, still in silence. The

clocks struck eleven as he threw the end of his cigar away; a tiny, luminous speck, which shot through the misty atmosphere below the balcony like a falling star.

"I may as well go and see how your father is getting on yonder," he said, as the spark of light vanished in the darkness below. "Good night, Diana. Don't sit too long in the cold night-air; and don't sit up for your father—there's no knowing when he may be home."

The girl did not answer him. She listened to the shutting of the door as it closed behind him, and then folded her arms upon the iron rail of the balcony, laid her head upon them, and wept silently. Her life was very dreary, and it seemed to her as if the last hope which had sustained her against an unnatural despair had been taken away from her to-night.

Twelve o'clock sounded with a feeble little *carillon* from one of the steeples, and still she sat with her head resting upon her folded arms. Her eyes were quite dry by this time; for with her tears were very rare, and the passion which occasioned them must needs be intense. The night-air grew chill and damp; but although she shivered now and then beneath that creeping, penetrating cold which is peculiar to night-air, she did not stir from her place in the balcony till she was startled by the opening of the door in the room behind her.

All was dark within, but Diana Paget was very familiar with the footstep which sounded on the carpetless floor. It was Valentine Hawkehurst, and not her father, whose step her quick ear distinguished.

"Diana," he called; and then he muttered in a tone of surprise, "all dark still. Ah! she has gone to bed, I suppose. That's a pity!" The figure in the balcony caught his eye at this moment.

"What in goodness' name has kept you out there all this time?" he asked; "do you want to catch your death of cold?"

He was standing by the mantelpiece lighting a candle as he asked this unceremonious question. The light of the candle shone full upon his face when Diana came into the room, and she could see that he was paler than usual.

"Is there any thing the matter?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes; there is a great deal the matter. You will have to leave Forêtdechène by the earliest train to-morrow morning, on the first stage of your journey to England. Look here, my girl! I can give you just about the money that will carry you safely to London; and when you are once there, Providence must do the rest."

"Valentine, what do you mean?"

"I mean, that you cannot get away from this place—you cannot dis sever yourself from the people you have been living with, too soon. Come, come, don't shiver, child. Take a few drops of this cognac, and let me see the colour come back to your face before I say any more."

He poured the dregs of a bottle of brandy into a glass, and made

her drink the spirit. He was obliged to force the rim of the glass between her set teeth before he could succeed in this.

"Come, Diana," he said, after she had drunk, "you have been a pupil in the school of adversity so long, that you ought to be able to take misfortunes pretty quietly. There's a balance struck somehow or other, depend upon it, my girl; and the prosperous people who pay their debts have to suffer, as well as the Macaire family. I'm a scamp and a scoundrel, but I'm your true friend nevertheless, Diana; and you must promise to take my advice. Tell me that you will trust me."

"I have no one else to trust."

"No one else in this place. But in England you have your old friend,—the woman with whom you were at school. Do you think she would refuse to give you a temporary home if you sued to her *in forma pauperis*?"

"No, I don't think she would refuse. She was very good to me. But why am I to go back to London?"

"Because to stay here would be ruin and disgrace to you; because the tie that links you to Horatio Paget must be cut at any hazard."

"But why?"

"For the best or worst of reasons. Your father has been trying a trick to-night which has been hitherto so infallible, that I suppose he had grown careless as to his execution of it. Or perhaps he took a false measure of the man he was playing with. In any case, he has been found out, and has been arrested by the police."

"Arrested, for cheating at cards!" exclaimed the girl, with a look of unspeakable disgust and horror. Valentine's arm was ready to support her, if she had shown any symptom of fainting; but she did not. She stood erect before him, very pale, but firm as a rock.

"And you want me to go away?" she said.

"Yes, I want you to disappear from this place before you become notorious as your father's daughter. *That* would be about the worst reputation which you could carry through life. Believe me that I wish you well, Diana, and be ruled by me."

"I will," she answered, with a kind of despairing resignation. "It seems very dreary to go back to England to face the world all alone. But I will do as you tell me."

She did not express any sympathy for her father, then languishing under arrest, whereby she proved herself very wicked and unwomanly, no doubt. But neither womanly virtues nor Christian graces are wont to flourish in the school in which Diana Paget had been reared. She obeyed Valentine Hawkehurst to the letter, without any sentimental lamentations whatever. Her scanty possessions were collected, and neatly packed, in little more than an hour. At three o'clock she lay down in her tawdry little bed-chamber to take what rest she might in the space of two hours. At six she stood by Valentine Hawkehurst on

the platform of the railway station, with her face hidden by a brown gauze veil, waiting till the train was made ready to start.

It was after she was seated in the carriage that she spoke for the first time of her father.

"Is it likely to go very hard with him?" she asked.

"I hope not. We must try to pull him through it as well as we can. The charge may break down at the first examination. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Valentine."

They had just time to shake hands before the train moved off. Another moment and Miss Paget and her fellow-passengers were speeding towards Liege.

Mr. Hawkehurst drew his hat over his eyes as he walked away from the station.

"The world will seem very dull and empty to me without her," he said to himself. "I have done an unselfish thing for once in my life. I wonder whether the recording angel will carry that up to my credit, and whether the other fellow will blot out any of the old score in consideration of this one little bit of self-sacrifice."

Book the Third.

HEAPING UP RICHES.

CHAPTER I.

A FORTUNATE MARRIAGE.

TEN years had passed lightly enough over the glossy raven locks of Mr. Philip Sheldon. There are some men with whom Time deals gently, and he was one of them. The hard black eyes had lost none of their fierce brightness; the white teeth flashed with all their old brilliancy; the complexion, which had always been dusky of hue, was perhaps a shade or two darker; and the fierce black eyes seemed all the blacker by reason of the purple tinge beneath them. But the Philip Sheldon of to-day was, taken altogether, a handsomer man than the Philip Sheldon of ten years ago.

Within those ten years the Bloomsbury dentist had acquired a higher style of dress and bearing, and a certain improvement of tone and manner. He was still an eminently respectable man, and a man whose chief claim to the esteem of his fellows lay in the fact of his unimpeachable respectability; but his respectability of to-day, as com-

pared with that of ten years before, was as the respectability of Tyburnia when contrasted with that of St. Pancras. He was not an aristocratic-looking man, or an elegant man; but you felt, as you contemplated him, that the bulwarks of the citadel of English respectability are defended by such as he.

Mr. Sheldon no longer experimentalised with lumps of beeswax and plaster-of-paris. All the appalling paraphernalia of his cruel art had long since been handed over to an aspiring young dentist, together with the respectable house in Fitzgeorge-street, the furniture, and—the connection. And thus had ended Philip Sheldon's career as a sargeon-dentist. Within a year of Tom Halliday's death his disconsolate widow had given her hand to her first sweetheart, not forgetful of her dead husband or ungrateful for much kindness and affection experienced at his hands, but yielding rather to Philip's suit because she was unable to advance any fair show of reason whereby she might reject him.

"I told you she'd be afraid to refuse you," said George Sheldon, when the dentist came home from Barlingford, where Georgy was living with her mother.

Philip had answered his brother's questions rather ambiguously at first, but in the end had been fain to confess that he had asked Mrs. Halliday to marry him, and that his suit had prospered.

"That way of putting it is not very complimentary to me," he said, drawing himself up rather stiffly. "Georgy and I were attached to each other long ago; and it is scarcely strange if——"

"If you should make a match of it, Tom being gone. Poor old Tom! He and I were such cronies. I've always had an idea that neither you nor the other fellow quite understood that low fever of his. You did your best, no doubt; but I think you ought to have pulled him through somehow. However, that's not a pleasant subject to talk of just now; so I'll drop it, and wish you joy, Phil. It'll be rather a good match for you, I fancy," added George, contemplating his brother with a nervous twitching of his lips, which suggested that his mouth watered as he thought of Philip's good fortune.

"It's a very nice thing you drop into, old fellow, isn't it?" he asked presently, seeing that his brother was rather disinclined to discuss the subject.

"You know the state of my affairs well enough to be sure that I couldn't afford to marry a poor woman," answered Philip.

"And that it has been for a long time a vital necessity with you to marry a rich one," interjected his brother.

"Georgy will have a few hundreds, and——"

"A few thousands, you mean, Phil," cried Mr. Sheldon the younger with agreeable briskness; "shall I tot it up for you?"

He was always eager to "tot" things up, and would scarcely have shrunk from setting down the stars of heaven in trim double columns of figures, had it seemed to his profit to do so.

"Let us put it in figures, Phil," he said, getting his finger-tips in order for the fray. "There's the money for Hyley Farm, twelve thousand three hundred and fifty; I had it from poor Tom's own lips. Then there's that little property on Sheepfield Common—say seven-fifty, eh?—well, say seven hundred, if you like to leave a margin; and then there are the insurances, three thou' in the Alliance, fifteen hundred in the Phoenix, five hundred in the Suffolk Friendly: the total of which, my dear boy, is eighteen thousand five hundred pounds; and a very nice thing for you to drop into, just as affairs were looking about as black as they could look."

"Yes," answered Mr. Sheldon the elder, who appeared by no means to relish this "totting-up" of his future wife's fortune, "I have no doubt I ought to consider myself a very lucky man."

"So Barlingford folks will say when they hear of the business. And now I hope you're not going to forget your promise to me."

"What promise?"

"That if you ever did get a stroke of luck, I should have a share of it—eh, Phil?"

Mr. Sheldon caressed his chin and looked thoughtfully at the fire.

"If my wife lets me have the handling of any of her money, you may depend upon it I'll do what I can for you," he said, after a pause.

"Don't say that, Phil," remonstrated George. "When a man says he'll do what he can for you, it's a sure sign he means to do nothing. Friendship and brotherly feeling are at an end when it comes to a question of 'ifs' and 'cans.' *If* your wife lets you have the handling of any of her money!" cried the lawyer with unspeakable derision; "that's too good a joke for you to indulge in with *me*. Do you think I believe you will let that poor little woman keep custody of her money a day after she is your wife, or that you will let her friends tie it up for her before she marries you? No, Phil, you didn't lay your plans for that."

"What do you mean by my laying plans?" asked the dentist.

"That's a point we won't discuss, Philip," answered the lawyer coolly. "You and I understand each other very well without entering into unpleasant details. You promised me a year ago—before Tom Halliday's death—that if you ever came into a good thing, I should share in it. You *have* come into an uncommonly good thing, and I shall expect you to keep your promise."

"Who says I am going to break it?" demanded Philip Sheldon with an injured air. "You shouldn't be in such a hurry to cry out, George. You take the tone of a social Dick Turpin, and might as well hold a pistol to my head while you're about it. Don't alarm yourself. I have told you I will do what I can for you. I cannot and I shall not say more."

The two men looked at each other. They were in the habit of taking the measure of all creation in their own eminently practical way, and they took each other's measure now. After having done which,

they parted with all cordial expressions of good-will and brotherly feeling. George went back to his dusty chambers in Gray's Inn, and Philip prepared for his return to Barlingford and his marriage with Georgina Halliday.

For nine years Georgy had been Philip Sheldon's wife, and she had found no reason to complain of her second choice. The current of her life had flowed smoothly enough since her first lover had become her husband. She still wore moire-antique dresses and gold chains; and if the dresses fitted her better and the chains were less obtrusively displayed, she had to thank Mr. Sheldon for the refinement in her taste. Her views of life in general had expanded under Mr. Sheldon's influence. She no longer thought a high-wheeled dog-cart and a skittish mare the acme of earthly splendour; for she had a carriage and pair at her service, and a smart little page-boy to leap off the box in attendance on her when she paid visits or went shopping. Instead of the big comfortable old-fashioned farmhouse at Hyley, with its mysterious passages and impenetrable obscurities in the way of cupboards, she occupied a bright glistening little detached villa in Bayswater, in which the eye that might chance to grow weary of sunshine and glitter would have sought in vain for a dark corner wherein to repose itself.

Mr. Sheldon's fortunes had prospered since his marriage with his friend's widow. For a man of his practical mind and energetic temperament, eighteen thousand pounds was a strong starting-point. His first step was to clear off all old engagements with Jews and Gentiles, and to turn his back on the respectable house in Fitzgeorge-street. The earlier months of his married life he devoted to a pleasant tour on the Continent, not wasting time in picturesque byeways, or dawdling among inaccessible mountains, or mooning about drowsy old cathedrals, where there were pictures with curtains hanging before them, and prowling vergers who expected money for drawing aside the curtains; but rattling at the highest continental speed from one big commercial city to another, and rubbing off the rust of Bloomsbury in the exchanges and on the quays of the busiest places in Europe. The time which Mr. Sheldon forebore to squander in shadowy gothic aisles and under the shelter of Alpine heights, he accounted well bestowed in crowded cafés, and at the public tables of noted hotels where commercial men were wont to congregate; and as Georgy had no aspirings for the sublimity of Vandyke and Raphael, or the gigantic splendours of Alpine scenery, she was very well pleased to see continental life with the eyes of Philip Sheldon. How could a half-educated little woman, whose worldly experience was bounded by the suburbs of Barlingford, be otherwise than delighted by the glare and glitter of foreign cities? Georgy was childishly enraptured with every thing she saw, from the sham diamonds and rubies of the Palais Royal to the fantastical bonbons of Berlin.

Her husband was very kind to her—after his own particular fashion,

which was very different from blustering Tom Halliday's weak indulgence. He allotted and regulated her life to suit his own convenience, it is true; but he bought her handsome dresses, and took her with him in hired carriages when he drove about the strange cities. He was apt to leave Georgy and the hired carriage at the corner of some street or before the door of some café, for an hour together sometimes, in the course of his peregrinations; but she speedily became accustomed to this, and provided herself with the Tauchnitz edition of a novel, wherewith to beguile the tedium of these intervals in the day's amusement. If Tom Halliday had left her for an hour at a street-corner or before the door of a café, she would have tortured herself and him by all manner of jealous suspicions and vague imaginings. But there was a stern gravity in Mr. Sheldon's character which precluded the possibility of any such shadowy fancies. Every action of his life seemed to involve such serious motives, the whole tenour of his existence was so orderly and business-like, that his wife was fain to submit to him as she would have submitted to some ponderous infallible machine, some monster of modern ingenuity and steam-power which cut asunder so many bars of iron or punched holes in so many paving-stones in a given number of seconds, and was likely to go on dividing iron or piercing paving-stones for ever and ever.

She obeyed him, and was content to fashion her life according to his will, chiefly because she had a vague consciousness that to argue with him, or to seek to influence him, would be to attempt the impossible. Perhaps there was something more than this in her mind—some half-consciousness that there was a shapeless and invertebrate skeleton lurking in the shadowy background of her new life, a dusky and impalpable creature which it would not be well for her to examine or understand. She was a cowardly little woman, and finding herself tolerably happy in the present, she did not care to pierce the veil of the future, or to cast anxious glances backward to the past. She thought it just possible that there might be people in the world base enough to hint that Philip Sheldon had married her for love of her eighteen thousand pounds, rather than from pure devotion to herself. She knew that certain prudent friends and kindred in Barlingford had elevated their hands and eyebrows in speechless horror when they discovered that she had married her second husband without a settlement; while one grim and elderly uncle had asked her whether she did not expect her father to turn in his grave by reason of her folly.

Georgy had shrugged her shoulders peevishly when her Barlingford friends remonstrated with her, and had declared that people were very cruel to her, and that it was a hard thing she could not choose for herself for once in her life. As to the settlements that people talked of, she protested indignantly that she was not so mean as to fancy her future husband a thief, and that to tie up her money in all sorts of ways would be to imply as much. And then, as it was only a year since

poor dear Tom's death, she had been anxious to marry without fuss or parade. In fact, there were a hundred reasons against legal interference and legal tying-up of the money, with all that dreadful jargon about "whereas," and "hereinafter," and "provided always," and "nothing herein contained," which seems to hedge round a sum of money so closely that it is doubtful whether the actual owner will ever be free to spend a sixpence of it after the execution of that formidable document intended to protect it from possible marauders.

George Sheldon had said something very near the truth when he had told Philip that Mrs. Halliday would be afraid to refuse him. The fair-haired, fair-faced little woman was afraid of the first lover of her girlhood. She had become his wife, and so far all things had gone well with her; but if misery and despair had been the necessary consequences of her union with him, she must have married him all the same, so dominant was the influence by which he ruled her. Of course Georgy was not herself aware of her own dependence. She accepted all things as they were presented to her by a stronger mind than her own. She wore her handsome silk dresses, and was especially particular as to the adjustment of her bonnet-strings, knowing that the smallest impropriety of attire was obnoxious to the well-ordered mind of her second husband. She obeyed him very much as a child obeys a strict but not unkind schoolmaster. When he took her to a theatre or a racecourse, she sat by his side meekly, and felt like a child who has been good and is reaping the reward of goodness. And this state of things was in no wise disagreeable to her. She was perhaps quite as happy as it was in her nature to be; for she had no exalted capacity for happiness or misery. She felt that it was pleasant to have a handsome man, whose costume was always irreproachable, for her husband. Her only notion of a bad husband was a man who stayed out late, and came home under the influence of strong liquors consumed in unknown localities and amongst unknown people. So, as Mr. Sheldon rarely went out after dinner, and was on all occasions the most temperate of men, she naturally considered her second husband the very model of conjugal perfection. Thus it was that domestic life had passed smoothly enough for Mr. Sheldon and his wife during the nine years which had elapsed since their marriage.

As to the eighteen thousand pounds which she had brought Philip Sheldon, Georgy asked no questions. She knew that she enjoyed luxuries and splendours which had never been hers in Tom Halliday's lifetime, and she was content to accept the goods which her second husband provided. Mr. Sheldon had become a stockbroker, and had an office in some dusky court within a few hundred yards of the Stock Exchange; and according to his own account had trebled Georgy's thousands during the nine years in which they had been in his hands. How the unsuccessful surgeon-dentist had blossomed all *at once* into a fortunate speculator was a problem too profound for

Georgy's consideration. She knew that her husband had allied himself to a certain established firm of stockbrokers, and that the alliance had cost him some thousands of Tom Halliday's money. She had heard of preliminary steps to be taken to secure his admission as a member of some mysterious confraternity vaguely spoken of as "The House;" and she knew that Tom Halliday's thousands had been the seed from which had sprung other thousands, and that her husband had been altogether triumphant and successful.

It may be that it is easier to rig the market than to induce a given number of people to resort to a certain dull street in Bloomsbury for the purpose of having teeth extracted by an unknown practitioner. It is possible that the stockbroker is like the poet, a creature who is born and not made; a gifted and inspired being, not to be perfected by any specific education; a child of spontaneous instincts and untutored faculties. Certain it is that the divine afflatus from the nostrils of the god Plutus seemed to have descended upon Philip Sheldon; for he had entered the Stock Exchange an inexperienced stranger, and he held his place there amongst men whose boyhood had been spent in the counting-houses of Capel Court, and whose youthful strength had been nourished in the chop-houses of Finch Lane and Threadneedle Street.

Mrs. Sheldon was satisfied with the general knowledge that Mr. Sheldon had been fortunate, and had never sought any more precise knowledge of her husband's affairs. Nor did she seek such knowledge even now, when her daughter was approaching womanhood, and might ere long have need of some dower out of her mother's fortune. Poor Tom, trusting implicitly in the wife he loved, and making his will only as a precautionary measure, at a time when he seemed good for fifty years of life and strength, had not troubled himself about remote contingencies, and had in nowise foreseen the probability of a second husband for Georgy and a stepfather for his child.

Two children had been born to Mr. Sheldon since his marriage, and both had died in infancy. The loss of these children had fallen very heavily on the strong hard man, though he had never shed a tear or uttered a lamentation, or wasted an hour of his business-like existence by reason of his sorrow. Georgy had just sufficient penetration to perceive that her husband was bitterly disappointed when no more baby strangers came to replace those poor frail little lives which had withered away and vanished in spite of his anxiety to hold them.

"It seems as if there was a blight upon *my* children," he once said bitterly; and this was the only occasion on which his wife heard him complain of his evil fortune.

But one day when he had been particularly lucky in some speculation, when he had succeeded in achieving what his brother George spoke of as the "biggest line" he had ever done, Philip Sheldon came home to the Bayswater villa in a particularly bad humour, and for the

first time since her marriage Georgy heard him quote a line of Scripture.

"Heaping up riches," he muttered, as he paced up and down the room; "heaping up riches, and ye cannot tell who shall gather them."

His wife knew then that he was thinking of his children. During the brief lives of those two fragile boy-babies the stockbroker had been wont to talk much of future successes in the way of money-making to be achieved by him for the enrichment and exaltation of these children. They were gone now, and no more came to replace them. And though Philip Sheldon still devoted himself to the sublime art of money-making, and still took delight in successful time-bargains and all the scientific combinations of the money-market, the salt of life had lost something of its savour, and the chink of gold had lost somewhat of its music.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLOTTE.

THE little villa at Bayswater was looking its brightest on a resplendent midsummer afternoon, one year after Diana Paget's hurried hegira from Forêtdechêne. If the poor dentist's house in dingy Bloomsbury had been fresh and brilliant of aspect, how much more brilliant was the western home of the rich stockbroker, whose gate was within five minutes' walk of that aristocratic Eden, Kensington Gardens. Mr. Sheldon's small domain was called The Lawn, and consisted of something over half an acre of flower-garden and shrubbery, a two-stall stable and coachhouse, a conservatory and fernery, and a moderate-sized house in the gothic or mediæval style, with mullioned windows in the dining-room and oriels in the best bed-room, and with a great deal of unnecessary stonework and wooden excrescence in every direction.

The interior of Mr. Sheldon's dwelling bore no trace of that solid old-fashioned clumsiness which had distinguished his house in Fitz-george-street. Having surrendered his ancestral chairs and tables in liquidation of his liabilities, Philip Sheldon was free to go with the times, and had furnished his gothic villa in the most approved modern style, but without any attempt at artistic grace or adornment. All was bright and handsome and neat and trim; but the brightness and the neatness savoured just a little of furnished apartments at the seaside, and the eye sought in vain for the graceful disorder of an elegant home. The dining-room was gorgeous with all the splendour of new mahogany and crimson morocco; the drawing-room was glorified by big looking-glasses, and the virginal freshness of gilt frames on which the feet of agile house-fly or clumsy blue-bottle had never rested. The crimsons and blues and greens and drabs of the Brussels carpets retained the vivid brightness of the loom. The drops of the chandeliers *twinkled* like little stars in the sunshine; the brass birdcages were

undimmed by any shadow of dulness. To Georgy's mind the gothic villa was the very perfection of a dwelling-place. The Barlingford housekeepers were wont to render their homes intolerable by extreme neatness. Georgy still believed in the infallibility of her native town, and the primness of Barlingford reigned supreme in the gothic villa. There were no books scattered on the polished walnut-wood tables in the drawing-room, no cabinets crammed with scraps of old china, no pictures, no queer old Indian feather-screens, no marvels of Chinese carving in discoloured ivory; none of those traces which the footsteps of the "collector" always leave behind him. Mr. Sheldon had no leisure for collecting; and Georgy preferred the gaudy pink-and-blue vases of a Regent-street china-shop to all the dingy *chefs-d'œuvre* of a Wedgwood, or the quaint shepherds and shepherdesses of Chelsea. As for books, were there not four or five resplendent volumes primly disposed on one of the tables; an illustrated edition of Cowper's lively and thrilling poems; a volume of Rambles in Scotland, with copper-plate engravings of "Melrose by night," and Glasgow Cathedral, and Ben Nevis, and other scenic and architectural glories of North Britain; a couple of volumes of *Punch*, and an illustrated *Vicar of Wakefield*; and what more could elevated taste demand in the way of literature? Nobody ever read the books; but Mrs. Sheldon's visitors were sometimes glad to take refuge in the Scottish scenery and the pictorial Vicar, during that interval of dulness and indigestion which succeeds a middle-class dinner. Georgy read a great many books; but they were all novels, procured from the Bayswater branch of a fashionable circulating library, and were condemned unread by Mr. Sheldon, who considered all works of fiction perfectly equal in demerit, and stigmatised them, in a general way, as "senseless trash." He had tried to read novels in the dreary days of his Bloomsbury probation; but he had found that the heroes of them were impracticable beings, who were always talking of honour and chivalry, and always sacrificing their own interests in an utterly preposterous manner; and he had thrown aside story after story in disgust.

"Give me a book that is something like life, and I'll read it," he exclaimed impatiently; "but I can't swallow the high-flown prosings of impossibly virtuous inanities."

One day, indeed, he had been struck by the power of a book, a book written by a certain Frenchman called Balzac. He had been rivetted by the hideous cynicism, the supreme power of penetration into the vilest corners of wicked hearts; and he had flung the book from him at last with an expression of unmitigated admiration.

"That man knows his fellows," he cried, "and is not hypocrite enough to conceal his knowledge or to trick out his puppets in the tinsel and rags of false sentiment in order that critics and public may cry, 'See, what noble instincts, what generous impulses, what unbounded sympathy for his fellow-creatures this man has!' This Frenchman is

an artist, and is not afraid to face the difficulties of his art. What a scoundrel this Philippe Bridau is! And after wallowing in the gutter, he lives to bespatter his virtuous brother with the mire from his carriage-wheels. That is *real* life. Your English novelist would have made his villain hang himself with the string of his waistcoat in a condemned cell, while his amiable hero was declared heir to a dukedom and forty thousand a year. But this fellow Balzac knows better than that."

The days had passed when Mr. Sheldon had leisure to read Balzac. He read nothing but the newspapers now, and in the newspapers he read very little more than the money articles, and such political news as seemed likely to affect the money-market. There is no such sole absorbing pursuit as the race which men run whose goal is the glittering Temple of Plutus. The golden apples which tempted Atalanta to slacken her pace are always rolling *before* the modern runner, and the greed of gain lends the wings of Hermes to his feet. Mr. Sheldon had sighed for pleasures sometimes in the days of his Bloomsbury martyrdom. He had sat by his open window on sultry summer evenings, smoking his solitary cigar, and thinking moodily of all the pleasant resting-places from which other men were looking out at that golden western sky, deepening into crimson and melting into purples which even the London smoke could not obscure. He had sat alone, thinking of jovial parties lounging in the bow-windows of Greenwich taverns, with cool green hock-glasses and pale amber wine, and a litter of fruit and flowers on the table before them, while the broad river flowed past them with all the glory of the sunset on the rippling water, and one black brig standing sharply out against the yellow sky. He had thought of Richmond, and the dashing young men who drove there every summer in drags; of Epsom, and the great Derby mob; and of all those golden goblets of pleasure which prosperous manhood drains to the very dregs. He had fancied the enjoyments which would be his if ever he were rich enough to pay for them. And now he was able to afford all such pleasures he cared nothing for them; for the ecstasy of making money seemed better than any masculine dissipation or delight. He did sometimes dine at Greenwich. He knew the *menus* of the different taverns by heart, and had discovered that they were all alike vanity and indigestion; but he never seated himself at one of those glistening little tables, or deliberated with an obsequious waiter over the mysteries of the wine *carte*, without a settled purpose to be served by the eating of the dinner, and a definite good to be achieved by the wine he ordered. He gave many such entertainments at home and abroad; but they were all given to men who were likely to be useful to him—to rich men, or the toadies and hangers-on of rich men, the grand viziers of the sultans of the money-market. Such a thing as pleasure or hospitality pure and simple had no place in the plan of Mr. Sheldon's life. The race in which he was running was not to be won by a loiterer. The golden apples were always rolling on

before the runner; and woe be to him who turned away from the course to dally with the flowers or loiter by the cool streams that beautified the wayside.

Thus it was that Mr. Sheldon's existence grew day by day more completely absorbed by business pursuits and business interests. Poor Georgy complained peevishly of her husband's neglect; but she did not dare to pour her lamentations into the ear of the offender. It was a kind of relief to grumble about his busy life to servants and humble female friends and confidantes; but what could she say to Philip Sheldon himself? What ground had she for complaint? He very seldom stayed out late; he never came home tipsy. He was quite as cool and clear-headed and business-like, and as well able to "tot up" any given figures upon the back of an envelope after one of those diplomatic little Greenwich dinners as he was the first thing after breakfast. It had been an easy thing to tyrannise over poor Tom Halliday; but this man was a grave inscrutable creature, a domestic enigma which Georgy was always giving up in despair.

But so completely did Mr. Sheldon rule his wife that when he informed her inferentially that she was a very happy woman, she accepted his view of the subject, and was content to believe herself blest.

In spite of those occasional grumblings to servants and female friends Mrs. Sheldon did think herself happy. Those occasional complaints were the minor notes in the harmony of her life, and only served to make the harmony complete. She read her novels, and fed a colony of little feeble twittering birds that occupied a big wire cage in the breakfast-parlour. She executed a good deal of fancy-work with beads and Berlin-wool; she dusted and arranged the splendours of the drawing-room with her own hands; and she took occasional walks in Kensington Gardens.

This was the ordinary course of her existence, now and then interrupted by such thrilling events as a dinner given to some important acquaintance of Mr. Sheldon's, or a visit to the school at which Charlotte Halliday was completing her education.

That young lady had been removed from the Scarborough boarding-school to a highly respectable establishment at Brompton, within a few months of her mother's marriage with Mr. Sheldon. She had been a rosy-cheeked young damsel in pinafores at the time of that event, too young to express any strong feelings upon the subject of her mother's second choice; but not too young to feel the loss of her father very deeply. Tom Halliday had been fondly attached to that bright-eyed rosy-cheeked damsel of seven, and the girl had fully reciprocated his affection. How often they had talked together of the future which was to be so delightful for them both; the new farm, which was to be such a paradise in comparison to Hyley; the pony that Charlotte was to ride when she should be old enough to wear a habit like a lady, and to go about with her father to market-towns and corn-exchanges. The little girl had

remembered all this, and had most bitterly lamented the loss of that dear and loving father.

She remembered it all to this day; she regretted her loss to this day, though she was nineteen years of age, and on the point of leaving school for ever. To say that she disliked Mr. Sheldon is only to admit that she was subject to the natural prejudices of humanity. He had usurped the place of a beloved father, and he was in every way the opposite of that father. He had come between Charlotte Halliday and her mother, and had so absorbed the weak little woman into himself as to leave Charlotte quite alone in the world. And yet he did his duty as few stepfathers do it. Charlotte admitted that he was very kind to her, that he was an excellent husband, and altogether the most conscientious and respectable of mankind; but she admitted with equal candour that she had never been able to like him. "I daresay it is very wicked of me not to be fond of him, when he is so good and generous to me," she said to her chosen friend and companion; "but I never can feel quite at home with him. I try to think of him as a father sometimes, but I never can get over the 'step.' Do you know I have dreamed of him sometimes; and though he is so kind to me in reality, I always fancy him cruel to me in my dreams. I suppose it is on account of his black eyes and black whiskers," added Miss Halliday in a meditative tone. "It is certainly a misfortune for a person to have blacker eyes and whiskers than the rest of the world; for there seems something stern and hard, and almost murderous, in such excessive blackness."

Charlotte Halliday was a very different creature from the mother whom Mr. Sheldon had absorbed into himself. Georgy was one of the women who have "no characters at all," but Georgy's daughter was open to the charge of eccentricity rather than of inanity. She was a creature of fancies and impulses. She had written wild verses in the secrecy of her own chamber at midnight, and had torn her poetic effusions into a thousand fragments the morning after their composition. She played and sang and drew and danced admirably, and did every thing in a wild way of her own, which was infinitely more charming than the commonplace perfection of other women. She was not a beauty according to those established rules which every body believes in until they meet a woman who defies them all and yet is beautiful. Miss Halliday had thick black eyebrows, and large gray eyes which people were apt to mistake for black. She had a composite nose, and one of the sweetest mouths that ever smiled upon enraptured mankind. Nature had given her just a little more chin than a Greek sculptor would have allowed her; but by way of make-weight, the same careless Nature had bestowed upon her a throat which Phidias himself might have sought in vain to improve upon. And Nature had planted this young lady's head upon her shoulders with a grace so rare that it must needs be a happy accident in the workmanship of that immortal artist. Indeed it seemed as

if Charlotte Halliday owed her charms to a series of happy accidents. The black eyebrows which made her face so piquant might have been destruction to another woman. The round column-like throat needed a fine frank face to surmount it, and the fine frank face was rendered gracious and womanly by the wealth of waving dark hair which framed it. The girl was one of those bright happy creatures whom men worship and women love, and whom envy can scarcely dislike. She was so infinitely superior to both father and mother that a believer in hereditary attributes was fain to invent some mythical great-grandmother from whom the girl's graces might have been derived. But she had something of her father's easy goodnature and imprudent generosity; and was altogether one of those impulsive creatures whose lives are perpetual difficulties and dilemmas. More lectures had been delivered for her edification than for any other young lady in the Brompton boarding school; and yet she had been the favourite and delight of every body in the establishment, from the mistress of the mansion down to the iniquitous boy who cleaned the boots, and who was hounded and hunted, and abused and execrated, from dewy morn to dusky eve.

"I allus puts plenty of elbow-grease on *your* boots, Miss 'Allundale, though cook does heave saucepan-lids at my 'ed and call me a lazy wiper," this incorrigible imp protested to Charlotte one morning when she had surprised him in tears and had consoled his woes by a donation of pence.

"All things love thee, so do I," says the lover to his mistress; and it is almost impossible not to adore a young lady who is universally beloved, for the simple reason that this general affection is very rarely accorded to any but a loving nature. There is an instinct in these things. From all the ruck of Cheapside a vagrant dog will select the man who has most toleration for the canine species, and is most likely to give him shelter. A little child coming suddenly into a circle of strangers knows in which lap it may find a haven, on which bosom it may discover safety and comfort. If mistress and schoolfellows, servants and shoeblack, dogs and cats, were fond of Charlotte Halliday, their affection had been engendered by her own sweet smiles and loving words, and helping hands always ready to give substantial succour or to aid by active service.

She had been at the Brompton gynæceum nearly nine years—only leaving it for her holidays—and now her education was declared to be finished, and in less than a week she was to leave school for ever.

To most damsels of nineteen this would have been a subject for rejoicing; but it was not so with Charlotte. She did not like her step-father; and her mother, though very affectionate and gentle, was a person whose society was apt to become wearisome any time after the first half-hour of social intercourse. At Hyde Lodge Charlotte had a great deal more of Lingard and condensed and expurgated Gibbon than was quite

agreeable; she had to get up at a preternatural hour in the morning and to devote herself to "studies of velocity," whose monotony became wearing as the drip, drip, drip of water on the skull of the tortured criminal. She was very tired of all the Hyde-Lodge lessons and accomplishments, the irregular French verbs—the 'braires' and 'traires' which were so difficult to remember, and which nobody ever could want to use in polite conversation—the ruined castles and dilapidated windmills, the perpetual stumpy pieces of fallen timber and jagged posts executed with a BBB pencil, the chalky expanse of sky with that inevitable flight of crows scudding across it:—why must there be always crows scudding across a drawing-master's sky, and why so many jagged posts in a drawing-master's ideal of rural beauty? Charlotte was inexpressibly weary of all the stereotyped studies; but she liked Hyde Lodge better than the gothic villa. She liked the "friendly schoolfellows with their loud talk and boisterous manners, the girls who called her "Halliday" and who were always borrowing her reels of crochet-cotton and her pencils, her collars and pocket-handkerchiefs. She liked the free-and-easy schoolgirl talk better than her mother's tame discourse; she preferred the homely litter of the spacious schoolroom to the prim splendours of Georgy's state chambers; and the cool lawn and shrubberies of Hyde Lodge were a hundredfold more pleasant to her than the stiff little parterre at Bayswater, wherein scarlet geraniums and calceolarias flourished with an excruciating luxuriance of growth and an aggravating brilliancy of colour. She liked any place better than the hearth by which Philip Sheldon brooded with a dark thoughtful face, and a mind absorbed by the mysteries and complications of the Stock Exchange.

On this bright June afternoon other girls were chattering gaily about the fun of the breaking-up ball and the coming delights of the holidays, but Charlotte sighed when they reminded her that the end of her last half was close at hand.

She sat under a group of trees on the lawn, with a crochet antimacassar lying in her lap, and with her friend and favourite, Diana Paget, sitting by her side.

Hyde Lodge was that very establishment over which Priscilla Paget had reigned supreme for the last fifteen years of her life, and among all the pupils in a school of some forty or fifty girls, Diana was the one whom Charlotte Halliday had chosen for her dearest companion and confidante, clinging to her with a constancy not to be shaken by ill-fortune or absence. The girl knew very well that Diana Paget was a poor relation and dependent; that her bills had never been paid; that all those incalculable and mysterious "extras" which are the martyrdom of parents and the delight of schoolmistresses, were a dead letter so far as Diana was concerned. She knew that "poor Di" had been taken home suddenly one day, not in compliance with any behest of her father's, but for the simple reason that her kinswoman's patience

had been worn out by the Captain's dishonesty. It is doubtful whether Priscilla Paget had ever communicated these facts in any set phrase, but in a boarding-school such things make themselves known; and the girls had discussed the delinquencies of that dreadful creature, Captain Paget, very freely in the security of their dormitories.

Charlotte knew that her dearest friend was not a person whom it was advantageous to know. She had seen Diana depart ignominiously, and return mysteriously after an absence of some years, very shabby, very poor, very sombre and melancholy, and with no inclination to talk of those years of absence. Miss Halliday had known all this, and had asked no questions. She took the returned wanderer to her heart, and cherished her with an affection which was far beyond the average measure of sisterly love.

"I thought I should never see you again, dear," she cried when she and Diana had retired to a corner of the school-room to talk confidentially on the morning of Miss Paget's return; "and I missed you so cruelly. Other girls are very nice and very kind to me. There is a new girl, Miss Spencer—that girl with flaxen hair standing by the big Canterbury—whom I get on with delightfully; but there is no one in the world like you, Di. And where have you been all this time? With your papa, I suppose."

"Yes," answered Miss Paget gloomily; "I have been with my father. Don't ask me any thing about the last three years, Lotta. I have been utterly wretched and miserable, and I can't bear to talk about my misery."

"And you sha'n't talk of it, darling," cried Charlotte, pursing up her mouth for a kiss in a manner which might have been distraction to a masculine mind of average susceptibility. "You sha'n't talk of any thing or think of any thing the least, least, least bit unpleasant; and you shall have my gold pencil-case," added Miss Halliday, wrenching that trinket suddenly from the ribbon by which it hung at her side. Perhaps there was just the least touch of Georgy's childishness in this impulsive habit of giving away all her small possessions, for which Lotta was distinguished. "Yes, you must, dear," she went on. "Mamma gave it me last half; but I don't want it; I don't like it; in point of fact, I have had it so long that I positively loathe it. And I know it's a poor trumpery thing, though mamma gave two guineas for it; but you know she is always imposed upon in shops. Do, do, do take it, darling, just to oblige me. And now, tell me, dear, you're going to stop here for ever and ever now you've come back?" asked Charlotte, after having thrust the gold pencil-case into Diana's unwilling hand.

"I don't know about for ever and ever, dear," Miss Paget replied presently; "but I daresay I shall stay here till I'm tired of the place and every body about it. You won't be here very long, you know, Lotta; for you'll be eighteen next birthday, and I suppose you'll be leaving school before you're nineteen. Most of the girls do; and you've

been here so long, and are so much further advanced than others are. I am not going to be a pupil again—that's out of the question; for I'm just twenty, as you know. But Priscilla has been good enough to let me stay as a kind of second teacher for the little ones. It will be dull work going through the stupid abridgments of history and geography, and the scrappy bits of botany and conchology, with those incorrigible little ones; but of course I am very grateful to my cousin for giving me a home under any conditions, after papa's dishonourable conduct. If it were not for her, Lotta, I should have *no* home. What a happy girl you are, to have a respectable man for your father!"

Charlotte's brow darkened a little as her friend said this.

"He is not my own father, you know," she said gravely; "and I should be a great deal happier if mamma and I were alone in the world. We could live in some dear little cottage on wide open downs near the sea, and I could have a linsey habit, a horse, and ride about all day, and read and play to mamma at night. Of course Mr. Sheldon is very respectable, and I daresay it's very wicked of me; but O, Diana, I think I should like him better if he were not *quite* so respectable. I saw your papa once when he came to call, and I thought him nicer than my stepfather. But then I'm such a frivolous creature, Di, and am always thinking what I ought not to think."

Nearly a year had passed since Diana's return, and the girl's life had been very monotonous during that time. She had stuck bravely to the abridgments and the juvenile scraps of -ologies, and had been altogether a model of propriety, sewing on such a number of strings and buttons during the period as can only be compassed by the maternal mind. Her existence had been by no means as joyless or desolate as such an existence is generally represented by the writer of fiction. There was plenty of life and bustle in the big prosperous boarding-school, if there was not much variety. There were small scandals and small intrigues, departures and arrivals, wonderful hampers of cake and wine to be divided among the elect of a fashionable dormitory; for there is as wide a difference between the tone and status of the bedrooms in a ladies'-school as between the squares of Berkeley and Bedford. There were breaking-up parties, and the free-and-easy idleness of the holidays, when a few dark-complexioned girls from the colonies, a yellow-haired damsel from the remote north of Scotland, and Miss Diana Paget, were wont to cluster round the fire in the smaller of the school-rooms to tell ghost-stories or talk scandal in the gloaming.

It was a life which, taken with all its small hardships and petty annoyances, should have been as the life of Paradise compared to that which Diana had led with her father and Valentine Hawkehurst. Whether the girl fully appreciated the change from the Bohemianism of her late existence to the respectability of Hyde Lodge was a question which no one had asked of her. She had fits of despondency now

and then, even in the midst of her duties, and was apt to fall into a sombre reverie over one of the abridgments, whereby she was neglectful of her pupils' aspirates, and allowed Henry the Second to be made the poorer by the loss of an H, or Heliogabalus to be described by a name which that individual himself would have failed to recognise.

There were times when in the midst of that shrill Babel, the school-room, Diana Paget heard the summer winds sighing in the pine-woods above Forêtdechêne, and fancied herself standing once more in that classic temple on whose plastered wall Valentine had once cut her initials with his penknife in a fantastical monogram surmounted by a death's-head, and encircled by a serpent. She thought of that cavalier companion very often, in spite of her juvenile pupils and the sewing-on of tapes and buttons. He had seemed to her a perpetual enigma and mystery when she was with him; and now that she was far away from him he was more than ever an inscrutable creature. Was he altogether vile, she wondered, or was there some redeeming virtue in his nature? He had taken trouble to secure her escape from shame and disgrace, and in doing this he surely had performed a good action; but was it not just possible that he had taken this opportunity of getting rid of her because her presence was alike wearisome and inconvenient? She thought very bitterly of her fellow Bohemian when this view of his conduct presented itself to her. How heartlessly he had shuffled her off; how cruelly he had sent her out into the hard pitiless world, to find a shelter as best she might!

"What would have become of me if Priscilla had refused to take me in?" she asked herself. "I wonder whether Mr. Hawkehurst ever considered that."

More than one letter had come to Diana from her old companion since her flight from the little Belgian watering-place. The first letter told her that her father had "tided over *that* business, and was in better feather than before the burst-up at the Hotel d'Orange." The letter was dated from Paris, but gave no information as to the present arrangements or future plans of the writer and his companion. Another letter, dated from the same place but not from the same address, came to her six months afterwards, and anon another; and it was such a wonderful thing for Captain Paget to inhabit the same city for twelve months together, that Diana began to cherish faint hopes of some amendment in the scheme of her father's life and of Valentine's, since any improvement in her father's position would involve an improvement in that of his protégé.

Miss Paget's regard for her father was by no means an absorbing affection. The Captain had never cared to conceal his indifference for his only child, or pretended to think her any thing but a nuisance and an encumbrance; a superfluous piece of luggage more difficult to dispose of than any other luggage, and altogether a stumbling-block in

the stony path of a man who has to live by his wits. So perhaps it is scarcely strange that Diana did not think of her absent father with any passionate tenderness or sad yearning love. She thought of him very often; but her thoughts of him were painful and bitter. She thought still more often of his companion; and her thoughts of him were even more bitter.

The experiences of Diana Paget are not the experiences which make a pure or perfect woman. There are trials which chasten the heart and elevate the mind; but it is doubtful whether it can be for the welfare of any helpless, childish creature to be familiar with falsehood and chicanery, with debt and dishonour, from the earliest awakening of the intellect; to feel, from the age of six or seven, all the shame of a creature who is always eating food that will not be paid for, and lying on a bed out of which she may be turned at any moment with shrill reproaches and upbraidings; to hear her father abused and vilified by vulgar gossips over a tea-table, and to be reminded every day and every hour that she is an unprofitable incumbrance, a consumer of the bread of other people's children, an intruder in the household of hard pitiless poverty, a child whose only heritage is shame and dishonour. These things had hardened the heart of Captain Paget's daughter. There had been no counteracting influence—no fond, foolish, loving creature near at hand to save the girl from that perdition into which the child or woman who has never known what it is to be loved is apt to fall. For thirteen years of Diana's life all love and tenderness, endearing words, caressing touches, fond admiring looks, had been utterly unknown to her. To sit in a room with a father who was busy writing letters, and who was wont to knit his brows peevishly if she stirred, or to mutter an oath if she spoke; to be sent to a pawnbroker's in the gloaming with her father's watch, and to be scolded and sworn at on her return if the money-lender had advanced a less sum than was expected on that security—do not compose the most delightful or improving experiences of a home life. But Diana could remember little of a more pleasant character respecting her existence during those brief periods when she was flung back upon her father's hands, and while that gentleman was casting about for some new victim on whom to plant her.

At Hyde Lodge, for the first time, the girl knew what it was to be loved. Bright, impulsive Charlotte Halliday took a fancy to her; as the school-girl phrase goes, and clung to her with a fond confiding affection. It may be that the softening influence came too late, or that there was some touch of natural hardness and bitterness in Diana's mind; for it is certain that Charlotte's affection did not soften the girl's heart or lessen her bitter consciousness of the wide difference between her own fortunes and those of the happier daughters whose fathers paid their debts. The very contrast between Charlotte's position and her own may have counteracted the good influence. It was very easy for Charlotte to be generous and amiable. *She* had never been hounded

from pillar to post by shrewish matrons who had no words too bitter for their unprofitable charge. *She* had never known what it was to rise up in the morning uncertain where she should lie down at night, or whether there would be any shelter at all for her hapless head; for who could tell that her father would be found at the lodging where he had last been heard of, and how should she obtain even workhouse hospitality, whose original parish was unknown to herself or her protector? To Charlotte these shameful experiences would have been as incomprehensible as the most abstruse theories of a metaphysician. Was it any wonder, then, if Charlotte was bright and womanly, and fond and tender—Charlotte, who had never been humiliated by the shabbiness of her clothes, and to whom a walk had never been a shame and a degradation by reason of obvious decay in the heels of her boots?

“If your father would dress you decently, and supply you with proper boots, I could almost bring myself to keep you for nothing,” Priscilla had said to her reprobate kinsman’s daughter; “but the more one does for that man the less he will do himself; so the long and the short of it is, that you will have to go back to him, for I cannot consent to have such an expensive establishment as mine degraded by the shabbiness of a relation.”

Diana had been obliged to listen to such speeches as this very often during her first residence at Hyde Lodge, and then, perhaps, within a few minutes after Priscilla’s lecture was concluded, Charlotte Halliday would bound into the room, looking as fresh and bright as the morning, and dressed in silk that rustled with newness and richness.

Keenly as Diana felt the difference between her friend’s fortune and her own, she did nevertheless in some manner return Charlotte’s affection. Her character was not to be altered all at once by this new atmosphere of love and tenderness; but she loved her generous friend and companion after her own fitful fashion, and defended her with passionate indignation if any other girl dared to hint the faintest disparagement of her graces or her virtues. She envied and loved her at the same time. She would accept Charlotte’s affection one day with unconcealed pleasure, and revolt against it on the next day as a species of patronage which stung her proud heart to the quick.

“Keep your pity for people who ask you for it,” she had exclaimed once to poor bewildered Charlotte; “I am tired of being consoled and pette; go and talk to your prosperous friends, Miss Halliday; I am sick to death of hearing about your new frocks, and your holidays, and the presents your mamma is always bringing you.”

And then when Charlotte looked at her friend with a sad perplexed face, Diana relented, and declared that she was a wicked discontented creature, unworthy of either pity or affection.

“I have had so much misery in my life, that I am very often inclined to quarrel with happy people without rhyme or reason, or only

because they are happy," she said, in explanation of her impatient temper.

"But who knows what happiness may be waiting for you in the future, Di?" exclaimed Miss Halliday. "You will marry some rich man by and by, and forget that you ever knew what poverty was."

"I wonder where the rich man is to come from who will marry Captain Paget's daughter?" Diana asked contemptuously.

"Never mind where he comes from; he will come, depend upon it. The handsome young prince with the palace by the lake of Como will come to fall in love with my beautiful Diana, and then she will go and live at Como, and desert her faithful Charlotte, and live happy ever afterwards."

"Don't talk nonsense, Lotta," cried Miss Paget. "You know what kind of fate lies before me as well as I do. I looked at myself this morning, as I was plaiting my hair before the glass—you know how seldom one gets a turn at the glass in the blue room—and I saw a dark, ugly, evil-minded-looking creature, whose face frightened me. I have been getting wicked and ugly ever since I was a child. An aquiline nose and black eyes will not make a woman a beauty; she wants happiness and hope and love, and all manner of things that I have never known, before she can be pretty."

"I have seen a beautiful woman sweeping a crossing," said Charlotte, doubtfully.

"Yes, but what sort of beauty was it?—a beauty that made you shudder. Don't talk about these things, Charlotte; you only encourage me to be bitter and discontented. I daresay I ought to be very happy, when I remember that I have dinner every day, and shoes and stockings, and a bed to lie down upon at night; and I *am* happier, now that I work for my living, than I was in the old time, when my cousin was always grumbling about her unpaid bills. But my life is very dreary and empty; and when I look forward to the future, it seems like looking across some level plain that leads nowhere, but across which I must tramp on for ever and ever, until I drop down and die."

It was something in this fashion that Miss Paget talked, as she sat in the garden with Charlotte Halliday at the close of the half-year. She was going to lose her faithful friend—the girl who, so much richer and happier and more amiable than herself, had yet clung to her so fondly; she was going to lose this tender companion, and she was more sorry for the loss than she cared to express.

"You must come and see us very often," Charlotte said for the hundredth time; "mamma will be so glad to have you, for my sake; and my stepfather never interferes with our arrangements. O, Di, how I wish you would come and live with us altogether! Would you come, if I could manage to arrange it?"

"How could I come? What Quixotic nonsense you talk, Lotta!"

"Not at all, dear; you could come as a sort of companion for me,

or a sort of companion for mamma. What does it matter how you come, if I can only have you? My life will be so dreary in that dreadful new-looking house, unless I have a companion I love. Will you come, Di?—only tell me you will come! I am sure Mr. Sheldon would not refuse, if I asked him to let you live with us. Will you come, dear?—yes or no. You would be glad to come, if you loved me.”

“And I do love you, Lotta, with all my heart,” answered Miss Paget with unusual fervour; “but then the whole of my heart is not much. As to coming to live with you, of course it would be a hundred thousand times pleasanter than the life I lead here; but it is not to be supposed that Mr. Sheldon will consent to have a stranger in his house just because his impulsive stepdaughter chooses to take a fancy to a school-fellow who isn’t worthy of half her affection.”

“Let me be the judge of that. As to my stepfather, I am almost sure of his consent. You don’t know how indulgent he is to me; which shows what a wicked creature I must be not to like him. You shall come to us, Diana, and be my sister; and we will play our pet duets together, and be as happy as two birds in a cage—or a good deal happier, for I never could quite understand the ecstatic delights of perpetual hempseed and an occasional peck at a dirty lump of sugar.”

After this there came all the bustle of packing and preparation for departure, and a kind of saturnalia prevailed at Hyde Lodge—a saturnalia which terminated with the breaking-up ball; and who among the crowd of fair young dancers so bright as Charlotte Halliday, dressed in the school-girl’s festal robes of cloud-like muslin, and with her white throat set off by a black ribbon and a gold locket?

Diana sat in a corner of the school-room towards the close of the evening, very weary of her share in the festival, and watched her friend, half in sadness, half in envy.

“Perhaps, if I were like her, *he* would love me,” she thought.

LYRICS OF THE MONTHS.

JANUARY.

SHOULD Christmas with its dinners,
Stuffing saints and starving sinners,
More of coming bills than passing bells

Suggest :

When the old year's shades retire,
Round a January fire
Mem'ries crowd to seize the moment
That is best.

Nestling round the hearth together
We defy the growling weather,
Treating all its blatant efforts

As a joke :

Our log sets all at nought,
As he crackles at the thought
How the wind will vent its wrath
Upon the smoke.

So, before the lamp is lit
Flick'ring shadows round us flit
Of the stories that we've heard

In olden time ;

Of the ghost of Lady Clare,
Or the phantom on the stair
Near the panel where the stains
Reveal'd the crime.

Then a silence leads us on
To remember faces gone,
Which to leave us once we hoped

Would be the last :

Gentle sorrow creeps apace
Round the circle as we trace
In the fire recollections

Of the past.

Eyes intent upon the flames,
Thoughts now wand'ring in their aims,
Fall with ashes, or rise upwards

With the spark ;

Till some childish laughter ends
Reminiscences, and sends
All our shadows trooping back

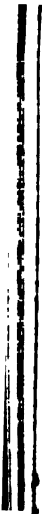
Into the dark.

A. T.



A. Thompson del.

JANUARY—FIRESIDE STORIES.



ENOUGH AT CHRISTMAS

"MISS FLORENCE COPE at table!" How many readers remember the happy chubby face, the cloth and pinafore of dazzling whiteness, the silver drinking-mug, and the dimpled hands ready to grasp the little spoon and fork? Autumn has laid his "fiery fingers" on the leaves many times since that sweet picture of bright childhood made a pleasant corner in a Royal Academy exhibition. I am sure it must have lingered in the memory of many a proud and fortunate mother. It came back to my mind with peculiar force one day in the autumn of 1865, in the West Derby Union at Liverpool. I was examining the various wards and departments of that admirably-managed house (I am not sure that it is not the best-managed in England), when a pauper nurse came in, carrying in her arms a plump blue-eyed boy about a year old, who shone after his first workhouse washing, and had just been fitted with workhouse clothes. He had that noble, that brave look you see in English baby-boys. It was hardly possible to believe that he was a little pauper, who was presently to sport a muffin-cap. He was so completely unlike the rest of the children in the house, and his calm earnest eyes were so eloquent, that I thought often of the little fellow afterwards, deeming him worthy of making a companion picture to "Florence Cope at table." I heard that his father and mother had died of cholera, and had left him, with brothers and sisters, to the parish. How is his table spread? There is no silver mug upon it, nor glistening damask; nor are there mother's eyes stealing over his shoulder, to teach him the proper handling of spoon and fork, and rejoice over his hearty appetite. Heavy and wearily the years must pass over his young head; and he must get through the fagging and the sad routine of childhood in a workhouse. He will know a master—let us pray that he may be a kind one—but no voice of close sympathy, no flesh of his flesh, against which little hearts are prone to warm themselves. The cholera has plucked all the flowers from the garden of his childhood, and has laid waste his prospect. He had no more to do with the tremendous misfortune that burst over him while he was crowing in his cradle than Miss Florence Cope's dimpled fingers had to do with the fashioning of her silver mug.

I do not know where a heart-ache may be got so easily as among workhouse children—children marshalled and drilled, and made so tame and patient, that they all look of one family—a dismal family, without nursery-songs or playthings. Take the workhouse boy or the Feltham boy, and try to get at his real nature. You will find him cunning, packed full of rules and regulations, knowing about the die-

tary scale; but it is impossible to say how utterly unlike a natural home-reared boy. A hard sad childhood indeed is that of the pauper, or of the inhabitant of a juvenile reformatory—perhaps the saddest, if not the hardest of any. Hard and sad as it is, however, it is protected against the temptations and pitiless accidents of the streets. The creature is saved the pang of hunger; the night under the dark archway, or upon the door-step; the bare-foot tramping; the drunken father; the bare board on a winter's night; and the low fellowship of "sneaks" and "wires." The lack of home influences is sad, and tells disadvantageously on the workhouse or the reformatory child; but the workhouse and the reformatory are the best substitutes society has yet been able to find for the natural home of children. It is true that we have orphan asylums by the score; that the forms of private charity by which the English heart expresses its sympathy for the sorrows of the children of the poor are various. Every trade, every profession has its charity, that covers the helpless heads of children. It is surely cheering to remember on these wintry days, under these gray skies, and in this sharp damp cold of ours, that thousands of innocent heads are roofed, that thousands of little mouths are filled, that thousands of tender limbs are clothed amply, by the sweet warm hand of Charity! We may and do differ among ourselves as to the forms which charity towards the young should take. Some among us lament over the vast sums of money that go to the architect instead of the orphan; and they hold palatial orphan asylums to be a mistake. We think it a pity not to find a new, humble, and virtuous home for the helpless orphan, rather than a cheerless bed in a ward—even in the most exquisitely-ventilated of wards. We cannot help glancing a little jealously across the Channel, to watch the way in which the gentle Eugénie does her work of charity towards the orphan. She rears no monumental pile to cover the heads of her helpless ones. Her protégés have neither park nor palace. Simple as *bon jour* is her plan. She takes the orphan by the hand, and finds a new home for it suited to its degree. The child enters some well-regulated workman's family, to be a help rather than a burden there. It finds new parents; and becomes one of the family, under the protection of the Imperial Orphelinat. In this way the broken home, where vice and want were the presiding spirits, is exchanged for a home of comfort, where good manners reign. This is the way in which orphan and deserted children are cared for among our neighbours. The *Assistance Publique* authorities never crowd pauper children together: they have a wiser pity for the helpless babe—born to nothing. They send it forth to the labourer's cottage, to grow as his children grow, and to become an honest tiller of the soil. They put no mark of shame upon the little one; they leave it the spirit natural to its age. Pauper-born, they will not cast it among paupers, dull of brain and craven of spirit, to grow up as dull as their caretakers.

Without pausing to decide which is the cheaper method of the two, we may confidently receive the French system as the more humane and rational. With the large sums of money which we expend in splendid temples of charity, our neighbours, with their simple idea of finding a new home for the helpless orphan, would have given comfort, in the best, the most humanising shape, to double the number of little ones we have been able to provide for. Wiser than us in one direction, they are more culpable in another. Paris mothers let their children die by thousands. Wet-nursing has become in the departments round about the French capital an important trade. It has come to this, that only the absolutely poor nurse their own offspring. Every mother who can afford it goes to the *bureau* to hire a wet-nurse, as she goes to hire any other servant; and she sends away her babe in the care of a stranger, and thereby doubles the chances of its death. The trade is so brisk in nurslings, that the competing offices bribe the doctors by giving them ten or twenty francs for every baby customer they send. The wet-nurses troop from the country to Paris, and carry off the infant or infants for which they have contracted, as a needlewoman carries work home. Terrible are the stories of the fate many of the poor little creatures suffer. Much foul play is practised upon them. Their baby-lips tell no tales. The changelings are many. When a mother can send her new-born child 20, 30, or 100 leagues away, in the care of a dull, ignorant, immoral country wench, to save herself that trouble which women have been taught to hold the sweetest pleasure and most honourable office of their lives, she cannot be very nice about its treatment. It has come to this pass in Paris, that a certain number of good-hearted gentlemen have deemed it necessary to establish a society for the protection of—not animals, but babies. They based the necessity for such a society on the frightful mortality among the infants sent by Parisian mothers to be nursed in the metropolitan departments. A newly-born child is swaddled, thrust into the arms of a country wench, and sent sixty or a hundred miles off into some poor village. Two or three months afterwards, the mother receives a letter to say that the little stranger—a little stranger indeed!—is dead; and here is an end of the matter. The nurse has room for another little customer; and so, in certain departments, we are told, wet-nurses put by a *dot* for their wedding-day! M. Sauvestre, who has written on the many dangers which beset the Paris babies put out to nurse, gives an illustrative anecdote.

A *diligence* had drawn up at a village inn, and the guard was hastily carrying the luggage of the passengers who stopped there from the vehicle to the inn parlour, in a drenching shower of rain. A mound of heavy packages was being piled upon the table in the room. In the midst of the passengers who had alighted was a woman in a rough cloak. Passing through the inn parlour, she had cast a parcel upon the table by the other luggage. A slight movement of the upper part

of this package attracted M. Sauvestre's attention. On approaching, he saw that a little living creature was packed in a pillow. While he was looking at this strange parcel, the guard returned into the room loaded with an enormous box. He was on the point of casting it from his shoulders upon the pillow, when M. Sauvestre roared out to him, and was just in time to prevent a baby from being crushed to death. The parcel was undone, and the baby was in the arms of the landlady when the wet-nurse returned. "She was not much concerned to hear," adds M. Sauvestre, "that her little charge had just escaped a horrible death; but she packed it up again, and went away grumbling at its inconvenient weight."

No wonder, then, that Paris should have a Society for the Protection of Babies, and that M. Armand Husson, the humane and intelligent director of the *Assistance Publique*, should have decided on the formation of four model wet-nursing establishments in the neighbourhood of the capital. So general and serious is the neglect of the first of maternal duties in Paris, that it is set forth as one of the great causes which keep down the population of France. It seems that Paris wives have yet to learn that the mother is the model wet-nurse. If we have not systematised child-murder like this established among us, we have at any rate destroying agents enough. In our great cities, where the poor are massed in dismal fetid townships, there are hapless mothers, to be counted by the thousands, who, nursing their babes, destroy them. The infant mortality among the poor working populations of London and Liverpool, of Glasgow and Dublin, and other centres of dense population, is appalling. The underfed mothers cannot give that which they have not. Living on a crust and a cup of weak tea, they cannot yield generous nutriment to their children. The accounts which were published at the time when the *crèches* of Paris were first imported into London, descriptive of the condition of the young among the poor working population of the metropolis, were heart-rending. I remember that, being engaged in the advocacy of day nurseries in every centre of industry, I lighted upon facts concerning the treatment of infants in factory towns, as well as in London, that led me to wonder how it was that one child in ten survived its infancy and reached even an enfeebled and early-doomed manhood.

The primary evil—the first attack upon the child's life among the labouring poor—comes in the shape of bad food, that is, of improper, deficiently-nutritive food. Dr. Joseph Brown, in his letter to Mr. Henry Fenwick, M.P., on the "Food of the People," deliberately asserts, after having given the closest attention to the subject, that "the plague-spot, the skeleton in the closet of England, is that her people are under-fed." By the people he means the "strictly labouring class and their families." He speaks after long experience in Sunderland and South Shields, and tells us that the power of English-women to nurse their offspring is diminishing. Hyper-lactation is on

the increase. When Dr. Smith reported to the Privy Council on the minimum quantity of food on which human life could possibly be expected to subsist, he found in the cotton towns that only in one of the examined classes of in-door operatives did the estimated standard of nitrogenous food exceed bare sufficiency. Dr. Brown insists that the mass of the people are under-fed. Deficient nourishment absolutely kills more than 50,000 babes every year. Take the following startling contrast, as quoted by the Doctor: "The obituary records of the Society of Friends supply us with most valuable data to determine how greatly the average death-rate of children might be reduced, could they generally but have careful and judicious *nursing*. It is to this advantage, and no other, that we find out of 936 deaths at all ages, which occurred in the Society of Friends in the three years ending in 1862, only 101 of that number died under five years of age. Were the deaths of children, then, in society generally at the same rate as amongst Friends, 54,000 lives annually would be saved. Whence, then, this enormous excess of deaths at the younger ages?"

Quaker babies are sufficiently nourished, and are well cared for in every respect. Among the Quakers the mortality is $9\frac{1}{4}$ per cent; while in Sunderland and South Shields it is more than 40 per cent. This difference measures the exact difference between the Quaker's table and the table of the labouring poor. There is enough, and always enough, at the Quaker board; and there is not always a crust, while there is seldom much more than a crust, for the poor labourer's children. Faint with hunger, or at best sustained on bad food, the child that will cling to life poises itself weakly upon soft, ill-formed unsteady bones. Tubercles form in the lungs, the glands of the neck swell. Dr. Brown sums the result up rapidly, and tells us that "a poor creature" is produced. The poor creature is poor in brain as in bone; his inheritance is a rickety case for a rickety mind. Poverty weakens the moral as well as the physical man. Deficient nutriment plants moral disease in the poor under-fed child. Dr. Brown wants to see the butcher and baker abroad arm-in-arm with the schoolmaster.

Whether the physical condition of England at the present time tends to confirm the propositions of Malthus, that population when unchecked increases in a geometrical ratio, while subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio—is an argument that cannot be discussed within the limits of this paper. England may be suffering from unchecked population and checked production or checked trade. For thirty-one years our legislators, while they left the increase of population unchecked (having no power to check it), checked the food-supplies of the people. Dr. Brown presents the feeble adult working population which is now under-fed, and is rearing sickly under-fed children, as the inheritance which the Protectionists have left to their country. He states that the *progenies viliosior* of to-day is the product of protection. But cheap bread—the big loaf—is now

laid upon the labourer's board, the baffled Protectionists answer; and see, the children are as sickly as their sires; the infant mortality is fearful still; the babes and sucklings whine for food, and cannot make bone and muscle; and hyper-lactation is on the increase among the women of the labouring classes! Our worthy Doctor admits all this, and answers that "man liveth not by bread alone." He says, "If we look around us, we discern the high price of all agricultural produce—corn and potatoes alone excepted; milk, the beef of infancy, is dear; cheese is dear; whilst beef, mutton, and pork are at a price which makes it a matter of certainty that only in homœopathic doses can any of these luxuries reach the stomach of the father or mother of a family of the labouring class." Here is the vice in our economy which is at the root of all the physical evil which the working classes suffer, from their sickly cradle to their premature grave. The food which supplies the carbon, which fills up the heat-waste of the body, has been made plentiful by the beneficent operation of free-trade. We have got coal in plenty now for the human engine; but this is not enough. The engine falls out of repair; the engine wears away. The detritus must be replaced with new fibre. It is this fibre—this nitrogenous part of food—which is almost at famine prices. The poor rickety child may be stuffed to the throat with cheap bread daily, and he will not thrive. It will fatten him and work his lungs, but it will give him little muscular tissue; it will give him no sound bone. A little bone and tissue it does contain, but not enough for his purpose. Milk and bread would give all his animal economy requires—caseine and bone-earth as well as heat.

Consider the predicament of the poor man's child. The first food he draws in starts him on a journey of feebleness and disease; for it is deficient in the elements his frame demands for its growth and for the repair of its waste. Milk—of which in many parts of England the agricultural labourer can hardly get a drop for his children—is so thoroughly adapted to the human economy as food, that strong men will work and keep up admirable health on oatmeal porridge and skimmed milk. A Northumberland farmer told Dr. Brown that his Irish reapers took oatmeal porridge and skimmed milk for breakfast and supper, and table-beer and bread for dinner; and that on this meatless diet they flourished exceedingly, and were content. The oatmeal and bread were at once heat-imparting and nutritive; the beer was valuable for the gluten of the barley and the slight alcoholic stimulant; while the skimmed milk furnished them with the precious repairer—caseine. Milk is beneficial to a greater degree perhaps than any other kind of food to the human being at every stage of life. But it is inaccessible to the labourer's family whether in town or country, except in the smallest quantities. The poor family's comfort is tea; which supplies a gentle stimulus, and contains a little nitrogen. Sugar is cheap; but then sugar is carbon. You see how hard the case of the

poor is. Dr. Brown estimates that a single pound of beef daily in the family of a labouring man would absorb one-fourth of the entire income of that family. Moreover, the labouring man being the hard worker—the creature in the group making the most daily waste of bone and tissue—must needs have a much larger share of the bone- and tissue-giving food than any other member of the family. Hence the wife and the children are necessarily less well-fed than the head of the family; and the weakness of the insufficiently-fed mother enfeebles and lays the root of disease in the baby. If the labouring poor of London had not fish to fall back upon, I cannot tell what would become of them. The coarse skate, in which they delight, is delicious to them, because it contains, in a higher degree than any other fish in the market, the nutritious principle—the fibrine which their system craves. Take the three fishes which form so great a part of the occasional luxury of the poor labourer's board, namely, skate, herring, and haddock—the three cheapest fishes—the "offal" of Billingsgate; they are the three which are most highly charged with the nutritive principle. Fried or baked with fat, any of these fish will take the place satisfactorily of butcher's meat. Here, again, is a poor housewife's difficulty: the fat is dear. Dr. Brown suggests the cooking of this cheap fish with bacon—the cheapest form of fat. The suggestion calls to his mind—as every suggestion of a change in the cookery of the poor must call to the mind of the suggestor who has had anything to do with the poor—the wasteful cookery of the labourer's wife, and her obstinate refusal to amend it.

Biding patiently as we may the good time when a knowledge of the economic use of every description of food and clothing shall have spread comparative comfort over the tens of thousands of our countrymen and countrywomen who now hunger at the bare board and shiver before the empty grate, may we not each of us in his degree, and to the extent of his means, be of some comfort at this time of the year, at least to the little ones who are out in the cold and faint with hunger from no fault of theirs? The children of the rich are coming home for the holidays with firm and rosy cheeks, and with the happy promises of the time sparkling in their eyes. The bazaars are filling with toys. Will it do any harm—will it mar the brightness of Christmas to remember that while there are our children, who delight over and play with toys, with cheeks as red as the holly-berries,—there are children heavy-eyed and lean-fingered—wary children, doomed almost to earn the crust with which they cut their baby teeth—who are makers of these toys, in miserable places,—that there are Jenny Wrens, and more unfortunate doll-dressers, and saddlers of wooden horses? Live where you may, in London, or in country town, or in rural district, you cannot have far to seek little ones to whom ENOUGH AT TABLE ON Christmas-day shall be a splendid and an extraordinary feast. Little feet will patter, baby throats will crow over the wondrous bounty of

plain roast or boiled ; the pudding will appear a mighty gift sent direct from Heaven. For one day the children of the poor will be comforted with the food that is needful to their growth and health, if only each comfortable creature will, as an offering of thanks for his enjoyments, see that some poor little ones round about him have at least what he deems the common necessaries, but which are to them the luxuries of life.

Biding the good time, I repeat, when every hard workman shall be able to command enough wholesome food for wife and children, bear we in mind this Christmas season, that the happy time has not yet come, and that there are little ones who, while our children yearn for toys, cry for food. Let none of us forget these innocent sufferers, nor approach them empty-handed. It goes hard with the poor mothers and the over-worked bread-winners—

“ But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly ;
They are weeping in the play-time of the others,
In the country of the free.”

W. BLANCHARD JERROLD.

MY LOVE AMY

A New Year's Gift

BY FRANCIS DERRICK, AUTHOR OF "THE KIDDLE-A-WINK,"
"MILDRED'S WEDDING," ETC.

PART I.

I AM one of a group standing before a painting in the Academy. It represents a little child—a prisoner. His cell is a garret, whose narrow window gives no outlook save a glimpse of a stormy sky. A broken chair and stool piled beneath the lattice tell of the child's attempt to reach it; perhaps in some wistful hope of release; perhaps only to be a little nearer the pale sunshine; or likelier still, in the fear of loneliness, and desire to look beyond his doleful prison. But he has given up all effort now, and sits upon the ground despairing. Darkness gathers round him, and the little light that enters the dusty panes is mingled with shadows of clouds, which fall on his clasped hands, or beckon from the wall like swiftly-rushing ghosts. On his right hand a long pale door swings hideous, showing within a dim recess hung with dead garments. These seem full of whisperings and horrid shapes, that come and go, rustling and muttering in the wind, as they peep and peer upon the lonely prisoner. There is no food, no fire in the gloomy room, no book, no toy; but at the child's feet, with a string fastened to the handle, there lies an empty porringer. Perchance with this and his leaden spoon he may at some sunnier hour have manufactured for himself a drum. But now all attempt to wile his solitude is relinquished; his imagination is full of terrors; his eyes are fixed and glazed with fear; his ears are strained to catch the last footfall of the passers-by in the reeking court below—his rare playground. His thin small hands clasp each other tightly, as though each little skeleton finger sought to find comfort in contact with its fellow. His pale hair—it would be golden if he were happy—falls on his cheeks uncombed; his wan face is tearless, but on its smooth young skin there is a look of age and woe that might have made an angel weep. *He* weeps not; he knows it useless. For him there is no love, no pity, no place in any human heart.

This is his portrait. Yet he is not all comfortless. The spirit of some little child, dead long ago, is drawn by his sorrows from the sky, and amid the stormy clouds, her spirit-face, bathed in soft light and tears of pity, looks down upon him lovingly.

"It is a terrible picture," said one of the group. "What is it?"

"The catalogue tells you—'Fatherless, and hated of his Mother;' and the painter is Mark Stewart, an artist unknown to fame."

The speakers moved away, and then I—Mark Stewart the painter—saw standing before my picture the figure of a young girl. She stood as though shrinking from notice—her head bent down. Nevertheless I perceived that she was weeping. Now, this “Neglected Child” was not only my picture, but my portrait—an image of my childhood, drawn from memory; and these tears were a delicious flattery, a joy to me unspeakable.

I longed to address her. I drew nearer—hesitated—stopped. My step disturbed her reverie. She turned hurriedly, and I saw *her* face—the face that haunted me—the spirit-face that in my picture looked down on the desolate child in his garret. Our eyes met, and hers were full of recognition—of love. Startled, and trembling in spirit, I held my hand towards her, as we do to a friend; but letting her veil fall over her now crimsoned cheeks, she hurried away, with a gesture that was both an adieu and a greeting.

I am a dreamer, not a man of prompt action; so I stood still bewildered, and let her hide herself among the crowd. But the moment she was gone, a passionate desire to pursue her seized me. I hurried from room to room. The gallery was filled with the fashionable world. Here were lovely faces,—a Belgravian stamp upon them,—foolish faces and learned faces, beaming faces and weary faces; but the face of my dreams had vanished.

To escape from my sick thoughts, I started up and rushed out into the street. I wandered purposeless till nightfall; and even then I was still so moved by the apparition of this face, that I cared not when they told me my picture was sold, and for a good price.

I haunted the Exhibition every day, but she never came again.

My picture was sent to a banker's in London, and it was he who gave me the cheque for its price.

Soon after this I had ceased to be a painter. I had come into a fortune and a name, and my studio was given up for ever. My new position brought me many friends; and for two years I led a London life, accepting eagerly every invitation that Belgravia or Tyburnia extended to me. Every ball was to me a hope, finishing in disappointment; for *her* face never appeared among the dancers, till at length I began wearily to think that she was—what she had ever been to me from boyhood—a vision, a creature of my dreamy brain.

I went down to Linton in Devonshire—to that wild country where the red deer still linger. I went for the stag-hunting. One day I reached Exmoor too late for the meet. I drew rein under shelter of a small covert, and standing in my stirrups, my vision swept the whole bleak horizon, without seeing a single human creature.

This unexpected loneliness weighed upon my spirit like a leaden hand. The wild weird aspect of the scenery; its passing mists, its desolate haunted look, speaking of chilled ghosts wandering at night, *and impish* shapes of wood and fen—all surged upon me in a cold wave,

bringing heavily to my brain those imperfect memories, and that sense of solitude, hatred, fear, and love lost, which made up that *madman* that I, Mark Stewart, now Mark Penolvor, kept mostly in safe chains beneath my sanity.

Surely the spirit of this wild waste and the spirit of my childhood were one, and their desolation was in and around me. I pressed my hand to my brow to shut out the vision of a child praying to God, with wild eyes, for reason; and as I, the man, uttered the same prayer amid the breathless silence of the waste, which counted the fall of a leaf and the rustle of an insect's wing, there rose up to heaven a piercing cry.

It was the voice of a woman; and in a moment a rider, at a blind gallop, her horse maddened by terror, appeared on the other side of the copse and dashed past me across the moor. *Hers* was the slight figure clinging to the reins, *hers* the young face, white with fear, that rushed by me like a vision. For an instant I stood like one distraught; then I gave the reins to my startled hunter, and followed her.

We were on the confines of the moor, near the rugged rocks and gorges of the Lyn, and the horse had dashed towards a narrow pathway with a wall of rock on one hand, a precipice on the other. To strive to pass her here would be death to one, or both; so I could but hold in my hunter and watch breathlessly, as the frantic animal skirted the gorge, while the form of the slight young rider swayed with horrible danger over the brink.

I could not bear the sight. I took a sudden and desperate resolution. I turned my horse's head, and scarcely even choosing a spot for my descent, I dashed down over the loose rocks and brushwood of the gorge. It was a perilous, mad descent; but I reached the bottom safely, and followed the course of the stream. I put my horse to his utmost stride, counted my distance, shot a-head, and then remounted the slope and gained the road.

I heard the furious beat of her horse's hoofs, and rode forward to meet it. Close at the turn was one of the worst precipices of the pass. Here, on the outer edge, the feet of my hunter touching the brink, I placed myself; and here, with every nerve strained, I waited—waited one breathless moment; and then the frightened creature, specked with foam and blinded by its own mad race, dashed up against me. I seized the bridle; the beast swerved, reared. I was jerked to the ground; and at the same instant my noble hunter, overcome by the shock, was forced beyond the brink, and beating the air for one wild moment with his fore feet, rolled over, and fell dead on the rocks below. I had dropped my own bridle, but my grasp on that of *her* horse was not relaxed; and holding it now with double strength, I flung the foaming brute on his haunches, and in the next instant I lifted his rider safely from the saddle.

As I felt the slight form yield to my arms, a violent bound of the heart thrilled my frame. All the fleeing flitting shadows of my mind,

the perfume of home flowers, and her shadow fell at my portal. It was like a fairy tale; and even if a griffin forest stood between us—

“Never look for fossils on this coast, Mr. Penolvor; we are on the granite here.”

I turned and greeted our rector—an antiquarian, a geologist, a searcher into dead words, dead stones, dead roots. “Indeed I was but digging into the sand idly; I was not thinking of ancient bones.”

“Sand, sir? Examine a handful, and you will find, not sand but shells, myriads of tiny shells. The caves here are full of them. The Cornish call them, not caves but fogous; the ancient word is vooga—a cavern.”

“Whence, perchance,” said I, smiling, “comes fogy, a creature of a cavernous and ancient aspect. Tell me who is the lady you passed but now in your walk?”

“A fair neighbour of yours, Mr. Penolvor; a Miss Caithewood.”

“Caithewood!”

“Yes, that is the name the old man has given her. It is appropriate. The word is a corruption from the Cornish, Caethiwed—bondage; and hers is bondage indeed.”

“Of what old man do you speak? You forget that I am a stranger at my home.”

“I am speaking of Mr. Pencarow of Concryack.”

He pointed across the bay to the gray turrets of an ancient mansion.

“He is near enough to be a good neighbour,” said I. “What kind of a man is he?”

“He is a madman or a devil. Ask the doctor, he will tell you the first; ask the peasants, they will affirm the latter. And herein is shown the excellence of the ancient Cornish tongue; the villages and mansions here have names of meaning: Concryack is corrupted from Conerioc—mad; and truly all the Pencarows are a mad lot.”

“A devil or a madman!” and *she* lived with him. What did this mean?

“And Miss Caithewood,” I faltered; “is she a relative of this madman’s?”

“None in the world. He adopted her long ago, when a child. He has been a lonely man. I will tell you his story one day. He is well called Pencarow—bereaved; or literally, the Mount of Bereavement. Good day; I must gossip no more.” And so Mr. Raven and I parted.

A month went by, and I gave a ball, and sent cards to Concryack, with an elaborate letter, in which I spoke of neighbourly love, my desire for friendliness, and I know not what. Alas, every word of my letter betrayed chagrin and love. My cards came back to me in a blank envelope. Utterly enraged, I mounted my horse, and rode over the bare hills to the Land’s End. On my return home late, a servant handed me a letter. “Brought just after you left, sir,” he said. I tore it open, and read this:

"I go out this evening in a little sailing-boat, *alone*. Meet me at five in Polurrian cove. You are ruining all by your mad attempts at friendliness. Cease these, I implore you, and trust always in—AMY."

Was I in my senses? What did this inexplicable girl mean by writing thus? Was she at the same time frank and reserved, bold and shy? I had never spoken to her of love, never presumed to ask for a meeting; and yet she wrote as though I had done both. Alas, it was true; I did love her, and she was driving me mad.

In fifteen minutes I was in my boat, careening across the Bay of Mullion. "She will be gone," I said to myself feverishly. "Her note says five; it will be seven soon. O, what a madman I was to ride!" But the wind was fresh, and blew me swiftly on; and soon the boat's keel grated on the sands of Polurrian. I sprang ashore; but there was nothing there save solitude and silence, and the dying splendour of the setting sun. With eager eyes strained on glorified rock and glistening sands, and waves flashing purple and gold, I gazed myself heart-sick; with eager ears strained for the sound of a voice or a footfall, I hearkened till hope died. There was not a sound save the roll of the sea, not a living thing save the hovering sea-bird, glancing in the dusk like winged shadows.

"O Amy, Amy! why not have waited for me?"

Clash! across the gathering darkness rang out the bells of Gunwalloe—that gray belfry by the sea, divorced for ever from its ancient church; and as the weird chime touched my ears, there flashed before my sight the word "AMY." It was written on the sands in old English letters. She had been here, and she was gone! The sun sank beneath the sea with this desolate thought; the glory on the waters shivered and died; all things grew gray around me, and the skies wept. As the chill rain fell, I launched my boat, and sailed away across the waves.

Again I had lost her! What would she have said had we met? Would she have held out her hand to me? might I have touched her cheek, heard her voice, felt the joy of her presence? O, the madman I was to ride! She would think I did not care to come; I, whose heart beat wildly for her, whose blood bounded, whose brain throbbed at her thought. Had I met her in this solitude, I would have wrung from her a promise of faith and love. Amy! Amy!

O, how I hated myself for that afternoon ride!

Night and clouds fell around me, and then a cold wind blowing from the north, before which my bark bounded like a bird. The wind swept by in gusts, but I steered my tiny boat with safety. Lights flashed from window to window at ancient Concryack, guiding my way; lights gleamed in the tower of Penolver like a beacon, and for this I steered. But suddenly my boat struck sharply against some obstacle unseen, and staggered beneath the blow. I lowered the sail with rapid hand, while the object against which I had struck floated away. Taking up the oars, I followed it, and in a moment reached a little boat, filled

nearly to the gunwale, and sinking. Bending forwards, a ghastly fear curdling my blood, I read in white letters on the stern the word "AMY." As I read, the moon broke out brightly, and the little skiff went down, down, and the moonbeams danced over her.

"She is drowned!" I said; and my heart stood still. Then I shrieked her name aloud to the raging waves. Amy! Amy! Amy! The winds shrieked back an answer: Dead, dead, dead! I had killed her. She had waited for me till the storm came, and I had killed her. Even now my boat might be passing over her dead white face. At that thought a ghastly coldness crept upon my veins, and I flung myself down, not caring whither my bark drifted.

I know not what happened after this; but when I awoke I was in my own room at Penolvor, and faces I knew were round my bed. I had had a fever, they told me—a fever brought on by exposure through a night in an open boat. Some fishermen had found me in the morning, and I was already delirious. It was a miracle my boat had lived through the storm—a miracle I had lived myself through this sad fever.

"How are my friends, my neighbours?" I asked.

"All well." And cards, letters, visits, all testified their solicitude for me.

"And old Mr. Pencarow, the eccentric man, the mad squire, how is he?"

"O, well; but wickeder than ever; a very demon now."

Had the death of Amy thus affected the old man? I seized nurse Honour by the arm: "Tell me, is she found, and—and buried?"

"My poor boy," whispered old Honour, smoothing my thin hand; "you're roadling again."

"Honour! my dear Honour! I am not wandering. Is her corpse found?—why do you force me to say the dreadful word?—or does it lie out in the cruel sea? Drowned, drowned! Nurse Honour, I killed her."

"Master, there is no one drowned," said nurse Honour.

Here the curtains were drawn aside, and the doctor's finger touched my pulse.

"I am better," said I feebly. "You may safely tell me the truth."

"What is it you wish to be told, Mr. Penolvor?"

"Is she found? Have they given her Christian burial?"

"You are dreaming still, my poor lad; there is no one lost, or dead, or buried."

"Not drowned! Amy—Miss Caithewood not drowned!"

"I saw her but yesterday. 'Tis strange that the visions of your sick brain should picture this lady to you as drowned."

"Perhaps master heard she was out on the bay on the day of the storm," said nurse Honour; "but seeing it coming on, Miss Caithewood rowed into Poldhu and walked home, leaving her boat moored there. It broke loose though, and was dashed to pieces,—the pretty little boat."

I sank back on my pillow, gasping for breath; the sudden joy was too great for my weakness. And with the joy there came a sick longing to see my love; to be comforted by her presence, tended by her hand, soothed by her voice. O, to feel her touch once, only once, upon my brow! O, if her tears might fall on my face; if her eyes might look into mine; if, bending down over my aching lids, her lips might breathe a word, one single word of love, then I could die! I could send forth my soul in a cry of joy, and sink into darkness for ever.

"Drink this," said the doctor. And he looked at me suspiciously, as my longing eyes gazed wistfully into his rubicund and jolly visage. Not a face for love-sick eyes to fall on; ah, no. So he gave me his nauseous drinks, and thought me mad, as he turned away with pursed-up lips and wise shake of bewigged head.

Youth loves to suffer, and to live. I got well, revelling in the thought that I should suffer more.

One November day I sat out on the rocks, the warm western sun, the clear Cornish sky above me, the blue waves at my feet; and from out of the sea there sprang up music, and the sound of oars moving gently as impelled by a dainty hand. I looked up listlessly, and lo! a little boat sailing by, and in it Amy, singing, one oar in her white hand, to help the lame sail that flapped in the breezeless air like a wounded bird. She went by singing—she who had caused my pain—singing heartlessly, like a cruel siren who willed my death.

Still singing, she dropped her oar, and without a glance towards me, she flung upon the beach a shell—a pink sea-shell that she had picked up idly in the sun, on some strange sands far away. Why fling this at my feet—this memento of happy hours not spent with me? I hated even the sun that had shone on her then. I would not stoop to gather up the gift she flung so carelessly. But as the oar dipped in the water again, as the sail flapped and the prow of the barque turned away from Penolvor, my passion broke the chains of pride and silence, and I ran down to the water's edge and into the waves knee-deep, and stretched out my arms with a cry of pain. "Amy, Amy! stay and speak to me, or I shall hate you."

She bowed down her head and wept.

"O, Mark, Mark! I did not think you were ungrateful."

Like a sigh, her voice came across the sea, soft and low; then, with a wave of her hand, a swift stroke of the oar, she rowed away.

I took up the shell because her hand had touched it; and as I held it lovingly, my caressing fingers found hid within its hollows a note.

"MY POOR MARK,—Your illness has grieved me sorely, and, like a stranger, I have had to ask about you with careless words, lest any should guess the truth. Do you love me still, Mark? Then love me always, and trust in me ever; but do not seek to see me, or to speak. You would ruin all, and destroy your hope utterly. You know not what madness, what violence I bear for your sake every day.—Your true AMY."

Inexplicable woman! Why write with this open, cruel affection? If she were not to me even as a very shadow, it might destroy my love; but unattainable as she is, fleeing spirit-like from my grasp, the outspoken frankness of her written words only maddens me.

PART III.

Two months pass slowly. It is the end of the old year, and there is silence between my love and me—silence as dead as these dry leaves beneath my feet. I have not even seen her ghost go shadowy by in gliding boat, or on phantom horse black as night, on which she sits in stillness beneath the pines, in the gleaming moonlight, with pale face turned towards Penolvor.

Meanwhile strange tales reach me of the old man's madness, his hate, his ravings against an enemy unforgiven—once his son. At times the neighbours tremble for *her* life, and tell of cries of terror breaking through the night silence.

Was I to bear all this for ever? or was I, with my man's heart and hand, to set her free, disobeying all her own behests?

In the depth of my perplexity there came to me a visitor—a little dried man, with legal face, and voice piped out of tune, and nervous hands twitching to tie and untie papers. He had much to tell, he said. Firstly, did I know myself?

"As much as man could," I answered.

Then who was I? what my name and age?

I was Mark Penolvor, and my age was twenty-three on this the shortest day of all the year.

Right as to age; but my name—had that always been Penolvor?

"No; I was once plain Mark Stewart; but four years ago, a kindly gentleman—a stranger—had left me his name, his lands, and the old goodly mansion of Penolvor."

As I spoke, the legal face looked up keenly, and the long thin hands drew forth a packet. I trembled,—'tis pleasant to be rich,—and the man's ways conjured up a dismal vision of legal heirs disputing an eccentric will.

"Fear nothing," said my visitor; "I bring you news of greater riches: riches to which this manor of Penolvor is as a handful of dust. Now, tell me all you know of yourself."

"I remember a cold home, a cruel mother, then a sojourn with a good couple, no kin to me, a painter's studio, and help sent by an unknown friend, and lastly, Mr. Penolvor—he was the friend—dies, and makes me rich. That is my life till now."

"By heaven, I have left out my love, the very fire and fibre of my life," I thought, smiling to myself.

"You have begun your life at six years old," said my legal friend; "have you no memory of that earlier time?"

"I can dimly remember a richer home, and a man who loved me well."

"Your grandfather!" cried the lawyer in triumph. "Now let *me* relate your history. I tell you, you know nothing of yourself. Your father was an only son, idolised by his widowed father; wherefore he grew up wilful. When still a boy, when other youths are in the trammels of a school, he broke loose and married. His wife was without name, without gentle nurture, without much truth or goodness; prettiness—that was all she had. But your race is prone to love rashly, plunging wildly into love's flame at first sight."

I winced, but was silent. He went on:

"The old man should have remembered this, but anger blinded him. He cast off his son, and refused him all but the smallest pittance. Five years went by, the girl wife was weary and sick, the boy husband angry and worn. There was not much love between them now; bitterness on his side, disappointment on hers, had long trampled out the feeble childish flame that lighted their marriage. But now there dropped upon their misery a hope. A child would be born to them, and surely this would soften the inexorable man they had wronged. The young husband sent the news to his father, and counted the days till an answer came.

"The reply was grim and cruel. If a son was born, the grandfather would adopt the child, and grant the parents a competence, on condition they lived abroad, and never sought to see his face. If they had a daughter, they need not even write to tell him of her birth.

"There was a long, a bitter struggle; but the condition was accepted. The son yielded through his wife's influence; she cared nothing to see her father-in-law's face, she wanted his money only, and the unborn child had no hold upon her worldly heart. But when you, an infant, were carried from your mother's dingy lodgings to your grandfather's mansion, she felt a mother's longing for her child; and as a comforter, she took with her when she went abroad a little sister, born but a week before yourself.

"Thus things stood for five years more, and then your mother's mother, a buxom woman of forty-five, hostess of a village inn, died of a lingering illness. Soon after her death, a letter from your grandfather reached the exiles; he would see his son's wife, if she came without her husband, and brought her little sister with her,—the child who had comforted her for the loss of her boy.

"The woman came, hoping to reap some profit for herself, as doubtless she did, in her low secret way. But an unlooked-for event grew out of her visit. Your grandfather, who had hitherto loved you dearly, transferred his love to the flattering child she had brought with her. And eccentric in all he did, he soon proposed to abandon his grandson, and adopt this girl instead.

"'Take back your boy, and give me this little sister of yours, and I will double your income,' he said.

"She consented. Do not be startled; I have told you hers was a low, selfish nature; and now it showed itself base indeed, for she sold her child's birthright, and rejoiced over the bargain she had made. She returned to her husband with her disinherited boy, leaving with the foolish old man her wheedling sister. A great, a lasting quarrel sprang up between her and her husband: they parted; he went to sea, and was lost on his first voyage; and she, struck by some strange pining sickness,—maybe remorse,—died in a year or two. She died in wretched London lodgings, for she had fallen into bad hands; and the ruffian band that ruled her stole her funds. Your grandfather, hearing of the lawless set she lived among, forced her to abandon his son's name. She would do anything for money. She called herself and boy Stewart."

"When your mother died, you were scarcely in your senses; a dull silent boy, sickly in mind and body. About this time Mr. Penolvor came to me. 'Would I find you,' he said, 'and rescue you; not letting his name be known?' I did this, and placed you with the good painter and his wife. The rest you know, save that at intervals I have had letters from that cunning girl your aunt, asking for you with feigned solicitude. I have replied to these with caution. The old man your grandfather has grown a tyrant, a very fiend, I hear. At times he raves, and even lifts his hand against her; yet, in her greed of gold, she bears all this, hoping by patience to rob you of your lands."

I shrugged my shoulders. "A vile woman," I said; "a flatterer, a swarner from her birth. What chance have I against her wiles?"

"The chance of near kinship. You have not heard all. Your grandfather has written—nay, I must not show the letter; he forbids it—to say that he will see you, and justify himself. You are to accompany me to his house on the last day of the old year. You will come?"

"Yes; but tell me—"

"I must tell you nothing. Ask no questions till the day arrives. And until then, farewell."

Left alone, I thought painfully over this story; and breaking through the lingering hours there came dull gleams of memory that maddened me.

Amy! Why did Amy flit across these dark clouds that hid my childhood? why did I feel her arms comforting me, as I thought of that day when, with dulled brain and tearless eyes, I stood by the deathbed of my careless mother? And in that earlier, happier time when, a spoilt boy, I played in my grandfather's mansion, why still did Amy's sad loving face seem ever close to mine?

Now, if my grandfather took me back to his heart, and discarded this low cunning relative of mine, would Amy be my bride? Would my wealth win her strange guardian's consent? O, that I might dare to hope!

Fevered by thought, I placed my chair by the open window; the weather was soft and sunny, and dallying with a book, I slept, while

the myrtles of the west and the breezes of the southern sea fanned me gently.

I awoke with a start. A spirit had touched my hand; shining hair had swept my brow; a breath had passed over me. A cry burst from my lips. "Amy! come back, come back!"

I had been dreaming of her. She ever haunted my sleep. It was horrible to awake from dreams and find that she was herself a dream—a vision perhaps of my heated brain, more real when I slept than when I called thus upon her shadow dreamily.

But what is this lying on my book? Violets and primroses tied with a purple ribbon. And between their scented leaves a note in Amy's writing.

"DEAR MARK,—I obey your wish. I will see you. Come to Con-cryack on the last day of the old year. Ask at the door for 'Amy.' I shall expect you at eight in the evening. I send you the last flowers of the dying year—spring flowers in every county but this—so accept them as emblems of the hope I feel.—Yours ever, AMY."

I gathered up the flowers and kissed them.

PART IV.

"Mr. Penolvor, are you ready? I have a carriage at the door; but before we start, I have a grave word to say."

It was my legal friend who spoke: I had forgotten him.

"Speak!" I answered impatiently.

"The purport of your grandfather's letter, which I would not show, was this: you must take a wife of his choosing at once—he will have no more low blood mingled with his race—or renounce for ever all hope of seeing his face."

"He is mad!" I exclaimed angrily.

"He is eccentric. Do you consent?—will you come? Yes or no?"

"No. Go to the old man, and say I am ready to give him affection and duty, but I will love and choose a wife for myself."

"At least come with me: we will try—we will conciliate."

"Is it a long journey? Can I be back by seven o'clock?"

"Certainly you will not be home by seven, or perhaps by midnight."

"Then I will not go. I have another appointment."

The man of law raved and protested. I was a fool, he said, to fling away thus a fortune. But I was rock and ice; and at length he threw himself into his carriage and drove away.

"He loses his inheritance for some mad appointment with a girl—wilful blood! wilful blood!" he muttered as he went, furious. I was half-remorseful. I could have gone with him but for Amy. I would have seen my grandfather and softened him: I would have faced this low girl who cheated him in his dotage, and perhaps have triumphed

over her—but for Amy. It was all yielded up now; every hope of my grandfather's returning love, every hope of my ancestral lands—all given up for Amy.

• I sprang upon my horse and rode away to Concryack. I went by the bridle-road on the cliff; the breakers shone white beneath in the glistening moonlight, and the wind swept my path in fury. The old year was dying in tempest, and the wild sea sang its requiem.

I rode through the driving mists like a phantom, and phantom-like I passed silently over the dead leaves of the dark avenue at Concryack.

It seemed like a dream, this gray old mansion and its battlemented towers, its ancient porch and huge oak-door, rich with carvings. Either I was mad, or I had seen this place in visions—visions that had come in loneliness, in darkness, fear, and pain—visions that shone through the rain of tears, and a long dull longing for love.

It needed not to open the heavy door; I *saw* the hall before the carved oak swung on its hinges. This picture of the armed knight with the gloomy eyes had frowned upon me in my lonely garret; this gentle Virgin with the Child she loved nestled in her arms had mocked my solitude; even this odour of faded roses exhaling from these tall purple vases had visited my dreams. In spirit I had stood beneath this painted, panelled ceiling many times, looking up through my garret roof on these winged minutes flying forth from the chariot of Aurora; and now that I stood here in the flesh, this seemed the vision, and that the reality. Mechanically, as one in a dream, I obeyed the servant's voice, following his steps, though I knew my way. And as I entered the long low room looking out upon the sea, I could have wept for grief. There was a little child with me, and it was for him I was sad. His phantom here was bright and rosy with joy, and he was going to such dull deadly misery, to such cold—

Good heavens! what is this? Here stands the boy in the bare, dark garret, just as I had painted him from faithful memory. I put my hands over my eyes bewildered, sad as night, yet joyful.

"Mark! my dear Mark! O, thank God you are here at last!"

I turned and saw her. She was by my side; her eyes shining with radiant tears, her hand touching mine—she was no spirit. I caught her in my arms and strained her to my heart. I covered her cheeks, her eyes, her lips with kisses. I breathed forth burning words of love, mingled with reproaches, blessings, tears. I was mad for very joy.

"Amy! my Amy!" I cried; "all my life long I have loved you; and surely you have loved me, else why is this picture here? Yet tell me; I hunger to hear the words from your own lips."

She drew back from my embrace with crimson cheeks.

"Surely, Mark, you know I love you. You must have known it all this dreary time."

She looked up reproachfully; but the ardour of my gaze, the flame of love that fell from my eager eyes, confused her suddenly. She

stopped, then smiled, and held out her hand frankly. I seized it and covered it with kisses.

"My dear Mark," she said with petulance, drawing her hand away, "be reasonable. Sit down and let us talk."

"You said you loved me," I expostulated, "and yet you refuse me the privilege of a kiss upon your hand: surely it is but a small thing to ask. O Amy, I have suffered so much!"

The cry broke from me, I knew not wherefore, and, like a child, I fell down upon my knees, and clasping her in my arms, I bowed my head upon her lap. I felt her hand caressing my brow softly, with loving words and falling tears, and then she stooped and kissed me. Upon this my lips were lifted to hers, and starting up into a man again, my arms clasped her fondly to my beating heart.

"Mark, Mark!" she cried; "why this frenzy? Do you forget that I am Amy?"

She trembled as she spoke, and blushes covered her face like a sudden veil of roses. There was sorrow in her look, and a fear new-born that gave me joy, a shame that enraptured my gaze.

"How can I forget that you are Amy? Have you not haunted me for years like a cruel dream? And now that you confess you love me, you answer my caress with a reproach!"

There was a moment's silence, and then Amy grew from rosy-red to ashy-white; she sank down into a chair, and put her hand upon her heart. I would have drawn near—I would have implored her pardon; but with a gesture she waved me back; then from her trembling lips there fell words which struck upon my soul like a death-knell.

"Mark, you do not use language fitting our near relationship."

"Amy! Relationship!" I clutched the chair on which I sat, and stared at her with wild eyes. "Not near; say not that, for the love of mercy, Amy! Do you know that I love you—have loved you ever since I saw you weeping before my picture? No; long before that I loved you! O Amy, tell me when I have *not* loved you!"

I stretched my hands towards her, but she was weeping and saw me not. And now I dared not take a step towards her—dared not comfort her—dared not wipe her tears away.

"O Mark, am I destined always to work you woe? This love is madness: it is not love—you deceive yourself—it is but affection. We have loved each other from children, Mark; this love, as you call it, is but memory,—the remembrances of childhood returning to you across that scarred, gloomy time—that bitter time, which, alas, I brought on you when I took your place here—innocent usurper that I was. Come, Mark, take my hand, and let us talk of old times. Do you remember Concryack? Have you forgotten your grandfather? I touched his heart, Mark, with that sad picture: he has loved you always. I probed his soul with stories of your hapless boyhood. And at last—O, thank God!—at last he listens, he consents to see you.

Every moment I expect the summons that will call you to his room. Are you not glad? Do you believe in my truth, my affection, unshaken through these long years? Am I your loving true Amy? Mark, Mark! speak to me; do not break my heart."

Speak to her! Call her by a hated name! Amy, my love! No, never; it was midsummer madness to do it. She was no relative of mine; she was my love, and I would only speak of love.

"If you are indeed so nearly of my blood, pray that I may hate you," I said. "Why did you come to me, if to love you is a curse?"

She answered me through fast-falling tears:

"Mark, I thought you knew me from the first. Indeed I did. And when I wrote, surely you should have remembered me then? And 'Amy,' your childish word for me, did not that tell you?"

"It only brought me dreams—more dreams of you. Amy, do not torment me with these proofs of a kinship I abhor."

My gaze had a world of sorrow in it, and perhaps of love; for a swift blush covered her cheeks, and she turned away her eyes from me, the man, and fixed them brimful of tears on me, the child, "Fatherless, and hated of his Mother."

"So you have wisely changed your mind, and you are come," cried a sharp voice. It was my legal friend. I smiled, and pointed to a chair.

"He plays the host already, Miss Caithewood." He flung himself easily into a seat, turned, and saw her tears.—"Miss Caithewood, I am grieved you are distressed.—Mr. Penolvor, I have greatly wronged this young lady. She has acted a noble part,—a disinterested, generous part. It is to her you are indebted for your grandfather's returning kindness. Mr. Penolvor, you have reason to be grateful to your mother's sister; you owe to her fortune and happiness."

"Cease, for pity's sake, man; will you drive me mad?"

The lawyer, astonished, shrugged his shoulders.

"I spoke ill of Miss Caithewood to you, being ignorant then of the facts. I speak now that her goodness—"

"Speak of her again, and I will kill you!" I cried, starting up in frenzy.

"My master wishes to see Mr. Penolvor in his room," said a servant standing at the door.

"After you, if you please," observed the lawyer, following me out: "I never walk before madmen."

I dared not glance at Amy; but I heard her sob as I closed the door.

Silently we went up the great staircase, whose carved balustrade and dim statues had come dreamily and shadowlike into many a weary hour of my childhood; and at length we stopped at a door I *knew*. Here the man of law laid his hand upon my arm.

"You are furious against Miss Caithewood. You are wrong; she is an angel. A word in your ear; say nothing against her to *him*."

He pointed within the room, and left me. As I stood within the shadow of the curtained door, my heart beat again like a little child's. A thousand memories thronged hot about me; a sea of tenderness rushed over my spirit; a mist came to my eyes. And through this mist I looked down upon the worn face of a worn man, who with keen gaze looked up to mine.

"Mark!"

It was but a word, a voice, but like a flood of light it lifted the darkness from my dulled brain, my clouded memory; the past came back to me, and I fell upon his neck and wept.

"O, my father, why did you forsake me? What is there left for the man whose childhood has been stolen from him? By cruel neglect and loneliness my brain was dulled, till I grew to think my life here was a dream."

Mr. Pencarow grasped me by the arm, and gathered himself up to his full height. His eyes were dry, his harsh features haggard and stern.

"Mark," he said, "we have both our wrongs; listen to mine. I had one child; I had but him in the world; for his mother was dead, and I gave him no stepmother. I loved him as only the lonely can love. At nineteen years of age he deserted me for a low woman, of so base a nature that I knew communion with her would lose me my son for ever. I dared not give myself the torture of contact with her baseness; I yielded up my boy to her, and lived childless and forsaken. You say your sufferings have made you dull and dreamy; you have heard that mine have made me fierce. Picture to yourself my pain, as I felt that the wiles of a wicked woman had sundered the tenderness of years, snapped the chords of virtue in my son's heart, and flung away all the fruits of gentle nurture and home love. When I looked to gather in a rich harvest from my son's affection, he gave me dead ashes, and laughed at me from a wanton's arms. I bore it uncomplaining; but the world said I grew eccentric and harsh. You have heard how, after five years of loneliness, I took their child, and in return made them rich. I was glad to have the boy; I poured upon him all the pent-up flood of love that froze at my son's marriage. I told myself I was quits now with this base woman. She had my child, I hers. So he had a double love—a father's, and a doting grandfather's as well. Yes, I loved the boy. There is a world of suffering in the words—I loved him. For five years he twined about my heart, a little prattling comforter, a daily companion, with tiny soft hand in mine, and pretty ways, and loving voice tuned to happiness. Mark, give me your hand: you cannot bring me back that little child. You return a man; but the little innocent who prattled of heaven is gone for ever. You have thought me a stern tyrant, unnatural, without heart, without justice. I abandoned my grandson to the world; you shall hear, you shall see justice done now. O, I might have known there was no truth in that base woman! The boy, you see, had twined about my heart

for five years, when on her deathbed my daughter-in-law's mother wrote that he was none of my blood, but a child of *hers*.

"Ah, Mark, you start, you clutch my hand; but it is true. They had basely cheated me—mother and daughter; they had changed children. My true grandchild was a girl. But I loved the boy; you will not forget I had been cheated into loving the boy. I went to the woman, and took her dying deposition. When I returned home I dissembled. I wrote to my son's wife, and prayed her to come hither with her young sister. For months I bore sullenly with her presence, hoping to love my grandchild, the girl—hoping to wean my heart from its love for the innkeeper's child, the boy. Meanwhile the children played together, and loved each other as children will. He called her Amy, a childish word for aunt; her name was Agatha."

Lifting my bowed head, I would have spoken, but Mr. Pencarow checked me with his hand.

"Let me finish; I am weary of the tale. My cunning daughter-in-law had thought at first to win me by her wiles; but beating vainly against my hardness, she saw at last I knew her, and then she grew sullen and vindictive. And one day, when I thrust the child Agatha from my presence a little roughly, the truth burst from her in fury. The day, which I had weakly delayed, was come; I must break my heart-strings now, and send the boy away. After her confession, I could not keep the son of the village host as my heir.

"I showed her her mother's deposition; I crushed her to the earth; I reminded her that I had said, that if she had a girl I would give her nothing; so I denied that this child had any claim on me, and I commanded her to tell no one the truth. My pride could not brook that the world should hear the tale of my dotage for a boy of her base blood.

"She answered me that her husband knew not of the cheat; and, greedy for money, she promised to obey me in all things. I saw she loved her child; so even as she had measured to me, I meted out to her. I parted them for ever. I planted in her flesh the sting she had thrust in mine. I told her to kiss her child and go. 'And take your boy with you,' I said. 'Confess that he is *not* your son, and I transport you for your crime. You know I have the proofs.'

"She wept and raved; but she was at my mercy, and she yielded. She left Concryack with the boy I loved, leaving me the girl I hated. Again I was bereaved by her vile arts, but I hugged myself in my revenge, and bore my pain unflinchingly. She loved her child. I taught her how the bereaved feel. I made her understand the bitterness of parting. My son died, and rumours soon reached me that his widow greatly ill-used the little child, my grandson. I sent the vile woman word that what she made the boy suffer, her child should suffer. She did not believe me; but hark you, Mark, *I kept my word*."

"Sir, Mr. Pencarow! No, it is too horrible; you cannot have made Amy endure such torture!"

"What matters it to you, Mark, what she suffered? I told her it was what you bore, and she seemed to feel it was only justice. A strange child, always pleading for you. She brought that picture of yours, and hung it up before my eyes, imploring me to bring you home. I thought she might be like her mother, so I tried her to the utmost. I have never called her grandchild, never given her my name. Brought up here as a dependent, she has never guessed the truth, that hers were all the rights, yours none. For years I hated the sight of her fair face; I was always looking to see the mother break out in her in some low meanness; but she has passed through the ordeal—a cruel one, Mark—and come out nobly. I have been harsh, irritable, mad at times; yet she has borne it all; her greatest trial, I truly think, when I told her of your sufferings, and said it was through *her* you suffered, since her sister hated you, and loved her only. Then, to try her more, I forbade her to mention your name, or plead your cause, under pain of beggary, expulsion. That did not silence her; she only ceased her prayers when I threatened to disinherit *you* if she held not her peace. This is her history; and she is my grandchild, Mark! After years of distrust and hatred, I give her that name in my heart. Through all her sorrowful childhood I treated her as her mother treated you. I gave her justice there, but in nothing else have I been just to her. I am old; the shadows of death creep gray about me. I must speak now; I must acknowledge her to the world. Mark, in my will I have given you a child's portion, but Agatha Pencarow must have Concryack."

"O, give her all, my father; it is hers. What right have I to steal her inheritance? I who stole her name and your love. I who have heaped miseries upon her, and in my morbid selfishness proclaimed to the world that I alone, of all children, had suffered grief, pain, loneliness. And she all this time lived an outcast, where she should have found a home; lived hated, where she should have been loved; lived nameless, where she should have been most honoured. O my father, I will take nothing from your hand that should be hers. Give her all your love too, for my sake."

I was so exceedingly moved that I wept aloud; and my grandfather—alas, not mine, hers!—laid his hand upon my head tenderly, and his eyes glistened as with joy.

"Mark, I will do all you wish," he said. "Call her hither."

I went for her. As I descended the great staircase, I gasped for breath, thinking of the change that had come over me since I mounted the steps so dreamily, in the pride of heirship, an hour ago; now, I the alien, the man of common blood, awake to myself at last, descended in the light of a great humiliation to seek the heiress, the woman I had cheated of name, place, and love. In my passion for her, hoping then to make her my wife, I had thought I did her great honour. I had dreamed of her as my humble, loving slave. I trembled now as I entered her presence; and the fire-light, as it shone over her bowed

on a strange condition. It is yours only if you marry the man I have chosen for you."

As he spoke my hand clasped hers convulsively, and my heart gave a leap of agony. O, this accursed relationship!—must I bear to see her a wife?

She started to her feet, and spoke in hurried accents.

"I cannot marry—I will never marry. I will not take your lands on such terms. Let me go in peace—give them to Mark!"

"Give them to Mark yourself, Agatha," said Mr. Pencarow.

"May I? may I give them?"

"And yourself with them. Mark is your husband."

I heard; but my brain was bewildered, my hands were nerveless, my speech benumbed.

"Children, will you not clasp each other's hands?" asked the old man querulously. "Mark, she has loved you all her life."

The blood rushed to my face; I rose angrily. Was this man indeed a tyrant, playing off a bitter jest upon us? or was he so mad, that he laughed at laws.

"Mr. Pencarow," I cried, "this is too much. If you are jesting, cease. You know that Amy and I are related—our blood is one."

"Ah! truly; I had forgotten that. Agatha, leave us for a while."

I led her to the door, and kissed her on the brow—a brotherly, friendly kiss—a kiss full of sorrow. She was trembling like a leaf; her grandfather's words had moved her very soul; her cheeks were icy cold and white.

As I closed the door and hid her slight form from my aching eyes, I would have given worlds of wealth and oceans of old blood if she and I had been two poor common folk, nameless, undowered, free to love and marry.

The workings of my face told the anguish of my soul; but Mr. Pencarow looked on me with a grim smile upon his lips and a joyful rubbing of his hands together

"You love her, Mark, I see. Well, do not grieve for your birth: Agatha will not mind it. I have a tale to tell you. When my son's wife died, my neighbour Mr. Penolvor came to me in perplexity, and told me a strange story. He had loved a lady, and wedded her in some sudden, rash, illegal way, but dared not claim her from her friends on such a marriage. He was very poor then; his miser uncle had Penolvor. Let me leave the details, Mark; your fiery impatience heeds them not now. Enough that his wife hid her childish unwise marriage, and wedded wealth and title.

"The blow struck her young husband into fever. It had been done so quickly that he—down here in Cornwall, striving to soften a miser's heart—never heard a rumour till the marriage was made. He was too generous to molest her jewelled tranquillity; he bore his fate silently.

"Five months passed. Then there reached him a letter blotted by tears:

"'Save me! save our child!'

"Hurriedly he went to the address she gave, and found she had quitted her husband's house, on pretence of visiting a friend. She had hidden her condition from him and from her father. Her terror of both was pitiable to see. She flung herself in agony on the man she had deserted, imploring aid and safety. He was generous—he gave both.

"In secrecy, in obscure lodgings, a son was born to her. Mr. Penolvor knew my daughter-in-law—knew her a woman not over-scrupulous, a lover of money. He went to her, and asked her to take the child. He found her in deep grief: a boy—her mother's child—was just dead; it lay upon her lap—a tiny white corpse. She was rejoiced to take the motherless babe—a goodly sum with it; and this boy she foisted on me as hers and my son's."

"And I am this child? I am no kin to Agatha? I am not the son of her mother's mother!"

"You are Mr. Penolvor's son. He left you his estate and his name. For your mother's sake he never named you, never told you—"

I could not stay to hear another word. I kissed his hand; then I ran, I flew from room to room, calling, "Amy, Amy!"

I found her in the south room, that looked out upon the moonlight sea. She stood by my picture; her hands were clasped, her face wet with tears.

I had her in my arms in a moment. I rained down kisses on her tears. I would not give her time to speak—to breathe.

"Mark, Mark!" she cried at last, struggling to be free, "this is madness. Let me go!"

"And is this madness?" I answered, kissing her again—"and this? and this? My Amy! my wife! my love! If I am mad, it is with joy. I am no more of kin to you, Amy, than is the great Gog, the giant of London."

"No!" she cried; and she rested her hands upon my shoulders, and looked into my eyes in wonder. For love, for amazement, for joy, she could not speak; but as she looked—remembering all her words, her letters, and her long, long love—shame seized her, and swift blushes came and went, and grew and grew, till neck and face were all a-flame.

I could have wasted with her in this love-talk all the hours of the night; but I checked my selfishness.

"Come, Amy; he waits for us!"

When we entered Mr. Pencarow's room, we found the rector there, the staid housekeeper, the man of law, and many others. My love would have started back, but I held her fast.

"Agatha, will you give Concryack to Mark, with your heart and hand?"

Amid a breathless silence she answered, "Yes;" and as her faint

low whisper died away, it seemed as though the very air was filled with joy; for there broke upon our ears the sudden clash of bells, ringing out to sea and land the birth of the year.

"A happy new year! a happy new year!" burst forth from all lips joyously. "There are years of life yet in the old squire. Long life and happiness to him and the young couple, his children!"

Silence again at last; and then my grandfather—I call him mine now—slowly drew forth from the large book before him a printed paper. On his harsh eccentric features there rested a triumphant smile.

"Friends, you see I must do things my own mad way. Mr. Raven, is this license correct?"

"Quite so, sir."

"By this special permission you can marry by night or by day, in church or in chamber?"

"Yes, certainly; and such licenses cost dear. They were not needful till the passing of the Marriage Act, some hundred years ago. The English married when, how, and where they would in the old times."

"Let the old times be, Mr. Raven. This is the first hour of a new time, bringing fresh hopes, happy faith, and warm love to us all. Don your surplice, and put your blessing on it. And, Mark, let me give you, as a new year's gift, my daughter, your love Amy."

A moment's hesitation, a sudden paleness, then my love yielded; and while the bells clashed out their welcome to the year, mingling their wild sound with the surge of the wild sea, ever rejoicing round Concryack, we knelt, and I received from Mr. Pencarrow's hand his
NEW YEAR'S GIFT, MY LOVE AMY.





H. A. Habbethwaite del.

W. H. Crane sculp.

SNOWFLAKE.

SNOWFLAKE

ONE Christmas down at Lynton Hall—
It was so pleasant, I remember—
The hopes and joys I now recall
Of that cold, bitter, bleak December ;
When winter's sky was overcast,
Or in the bright and frosty weather,
Snowflake and I—those times are past—
Walked, flirted, danced, or read together !

I called her Snowflake ; she looked bright
As snow fresh fallen in the morning,
Just flushed by kiss of rosy light,
Of sunny rays when day is dawning :
Her bosom—white like driven snow,
She seemed as fragile and as tender ;
I found—in waltzing, you must know—
Her foot was light, her waist was slender.

How lovely she appeared that night,
In sheeniest of gauzy dresses,
With tangled wreath of snowdrops white
All twining midst her golden tresses !
Round her neck clung orient pearls,
Which softly shone, yet glimmered brightly ;
She quite eclipsed the other girls,
When floating down the stairs so lightly.

Ah, me ! I recollect those hours—
Since then I've grown a trifle older—
I found just now some faded flowers,
Reminding me of all I told her.
And Snowflake ? Well, it's rather hard
For hearts with one another smitten—
But, let me see, I think the Bard
Says " lovers' vows in snow are written " !

J. ASHBY STERRY.

HOW I WON POLLY AND A POSTMASTERSHIP

BY TOM HOOD

I WAS the second sub-clerk at the Cowford Office when the postmaster, Mr. Dwerryman, was compelled to resign rather suddenly through ill health. As a consequence the first sub-clerk, Chaundy, and I had to do the chief's work between us until a fresh appointment was made. It was thought in the office that Chaundy was likely to get, not the Cowford Office, but that of Moilingam, the postmaster of which would probably be transferred to Cowford. He was the likeliest candidate for our vacancy, though Chaundy had been recommended for it by Dwerryman, who was a man much thought of at head-quarters. It was supposed that Chaundy was sure to get some sort of promotion; and I think it puffed him up a little, for he seemed to give himself the airs of a superior, and certainly made me do the lion's share of the work.

I didn't care. I was poor and a sub-clerk, and I never expected to be anything else. Indeed, I scarcely desired to be anything else. And why? Because I was in love. That is a thing to make most men ambitious; but it only made me, if not contented, at all events submissive under poverty. I had fallen in love with the heiress of one of the richest landowners in the county; and I knew no possible position within my limited sphere would or could ever qualify me to become a suitor for her hand. Dreams of ambition therefore did not trouble me. Had the office of postmaster-general or secretary been vacant, and made the prize of a severe competitive examination, I would have given the best years of my life, poor scholar as I was, to study for the contest, in order to try and win a position that would make me worthy of her. Failing, I should have come back without a murmur to my high stool, with a bold face and a broken heart.

She was a lovely girl—such a merry bright glimpse of sunshine! We first became acquainted—if I may so term her condescending ever after to bow to me—on one St. Valentine's-day, when I stamped some twenty valentines for her. When she was gone I looked them over—not without a pang of jealousy, which was allayed when I found they were either to schoolfellows or old gentlemen—her godfather, her uncles, and that sort of thing. A more innocent batch of valentines never swelled her Majesty's revenue.

How a man like her father could ever have had so charming a daughter, I can't understand. Mr. Darke was a harsh proud man, stern on the bench, and heartless at the board. He was severity itself with all tramps and beggars, and he preserved his game with the utmost strictness. There was a fierce hatred and a feud of long standing between him and the poachers, who were tolerably plentiful. He was

not the sort of man I was at all disposed to ask for leave to pay my addresses to his daughter.

So I bowed to fate; cherished Mary's image in my heart of hearts; and used to comfort myself in the intervals of business by reciting mentally Shelley's lines about

"The love of the moth for the star."

Besides this I had but one delight,—that of collecting foreign stamps for her. She happened one day to ask for one that was lying on the office-ledge; and I kept a watch for them ever afterwards. How grateful I was to the mania I had once scorned and despised!

This humble passion of mine had existed nearly two years under these not highly favourable circumstances, and, what is more, instead of diminishing it was increasing. Meantime Chaundy and I went on as two sub-clerks rolled into one postmaster, and no appointment was announced.

Early in December there was always a great ball at Cowford, whereat all classes met, and were supposed to fraternise. It was the event of the season in the county. Mr. Darke was one of the patrons, and occasionally honoured the ball with his presence and that of "his lovely and accomplished daughter," as the local journal gushingly styled her. This year he had not announced his intention of going, and it was generally supposed therefore that he would not be present. He had just made a fierce raid on the poachers; and was reported to head his watchers nightly in person, being determined to put down the gang, two of the ringleaders of which had just been sentenced to long imprisonments through his instrumentality.

One afternoon, about three days before the ball, I was looking out of window. My desk was just at the junction of the office in which letters were received, orders issued, and transactions with the public generally conducted, with the inner room in which the sorting was done, and the internal affairs of the office were arranged. These two rooms formed two sides of the small court or vestibule, which was open to the public; and the window where I sat was just in the angle, lighting the inner office, so that, by looking over the ground glass with which the window was glazed half-way up, I could see in profile all applicants at the outer office.

The other clerks were at tea—a meal I did not care for; and I had, just as an occupation, cleared the box and sorted the letters, and then returned to my desk. As I mounted the stool I saw one of Mr. Darke's servants post a letter.

He was only a stable-help, and had but lately entered Mr. Darke's service; yet I knew him, for it was a silly fancy of mine to watch all Mary's surroundings with minute care, and picture to myself where I should have made alterations and improvements, supposing I had been rich enough to make her mine.

I noticed that the fellow peered round, as if anxious to see if he were observed. Not noticing my face at the window, owing to the deepening twilight, he seemed reassured and slipped a letter into the box. There was something so odd about this that I at once went to the box and took it out: perhaps I half expected it was from Mary. It was in a wretched scrawl, probably the fellow's own, and was addressed "J. M., Post-office, Cowford (To be called for)." I hurried to a window which gave a view of the street, and just caught sight of the man climbing into a cart which was standing outside the poulterer's, a few doors off. I knew it to be the gamekeeper's cart, in which game was brought into the town for sale. As I watched, I saw the keeper come out of the shop, mount the cart, and drive off. The help had evidently taken advantage of his absence to steal off and post his missive.

I don't know why I took any further notice of the letter. Having ascertained it was his, I ought to have dismissed all thought of it. But somehow I did not. I watched anxiously to see who would claim it.

The claimant appeared next day: a couple of rough-looking fellows—railway labourers to all appearance—came in, and one of them asked for a letter for "J. M." Having obtained it, they drew aside into a corner and opened it; and the corner happened to be the one where my window was. With the utmost precaution against making any noise to alarm them, I raised the sash about an inch and listened.

The first words I caught were, "will go to the ball, and he won't return till latish."

"That's the time for me! That's the time, as he's comin' back agin," remarked the listener in a hoarse whisper.

"There'll be none with him but young miss, for there's none stoppin' here. Willis"—(that was the coachman's name, I knew)—"will drive the chestnuts. This is all I know; I shall post it when I'm in town with keeper, and sha'n't be in again till next week."

"That'll do," said the man, when he had finished reading; "we'll finish off th' ball for'n wi' a dance he won't loike!"

"Yes, durn un!" said the other; and with that the two moved off.

This discovery of mine settled a doubt that had been perplexing me. I had been undecided whether to go to the ball or not. The expense, and a feeling that I could not hope to do more than see Mary, without speaking to her, had deterred me. Now I felt I might go and warn her father of his danger; and by so doing perhaps not only do a service to the woman I loved, but perhaps be rewarded by exchanging a few words with her; by hearing her thanks; by—but I dared not dream of such happiness as dancing with her.

So I purchased a ticket; and when the momentous time arrived went to the ball with a beating heart, and a terrible sensation of choking in my throat. I took my station near the entrance until Mr. Darke arrived. Before long his carriage drove up, and he and Mary alighted. As he turned to tell the coachman at what hour to fetch

him, I saw a man push forward through the crowd, as if to hear what time he named, and then disappear. It was the man who had claimed the letter addressed "J. M."

This gave fresh strength to my resolution—which was needed, for I had begun to think I was dreaming, or had been mistaken, or exaggerated the case. Such a feeling was not unnatural under the circumstances; but the sight of the poacher—for I had no doubt he was one, and that was why he wished to revenge himself on Mr. Darke—had the effect of reviving all my previous convictions.

It was not without some nervousness that I asked Mr. Darke to step into one of the windows, and give me a few minutes' conversation. He looked a little surprised, but stiffly consented; and when we had found a retired seat in one of the bow-windows, I told him about the letter, and my conjecture that the stable-help had either entered his service to aid the poachers in their scheme of revenge, or had been bribed by them to give them information. At first he proposed to take a couple of policemen in his carriage, and try to capture the ruffians; but I pointed out that he would alarm his daughter—perhaps expose her to danger, supposing the poachers had fire-arms.

"Quite right. Thank you! I had forgotten that, and more—that if she once fancies I am in danger, she will be frightened to death whenever I am away from home. What do you propose?"

"Can you return home by any other route?"

"Yes, by two others, involving a circuit of a couple of miles or so."

"Then go by one of those. Miss Darke will be too tired to observe it; besides, it will not be light enough."

"But I should like to catch the scoundrels."

"I can identify them both, and will go to the railway and make inquiries and look about me to-morrow. You can have them taken into custody; and probably after a day or two in the lock-up they will make a clean breast of it, and give up the names of the others."

"Yes, perhaps best so," said Mr. Darke after some minutes' reflection. "But how can I thank you for this?"

I declined any special thanks, alleging I was only doing my duty; but the squire was very warm and pressing in his gratitude, inquired what I was, where I came from, and how I was employed. On learning that I had no friends or relatives in the town, he insisted on my coming to dine with him on Christmas-day.

"And I hope we shall be able to drink confusion to these rascals," he said in conclusion.

I suppose he was in a particularly good temper this evening; for he introduced me to his daughter as a friend of his who had rendered him a most important service. He little suspected that she knew who I was, and was terribly puzzled to think how a post-office clerk could have laid her father under such an obligation.

I mustered courage to ask her to dance with me, and she consented.

But why try to describe the unexpected happiness of the evening? I can only say, when I had handed her into the carriage and watched it drive off, I walked home as if I had come into a new life and a brighter world.

Though I did not get home till between two and three, I was at the office again by six to receive the mails from the district. I was tired; but I determined that no one—especially Chaundy—should be able to accuse me of neglecting work.

One of the earliest carts to arrive was that of the Fentleby district. The driver came in looking like a ghost, and stammered out that an attempt had been made to rob him, and that he had been fired at.

Chaundy not being in the office, I examined the man, and took down his answers in writing. On inquiry, I found that his route had brought him past Grasslands, Mr. Darke's house, and that he had been fired at between there and Cowford, at a very ugly part of the road, where it ran beside a canal, on an embankment. The more I questioned him, the more mysterious the affair appeared. He had seen no one, and there was not a bush or a stone to hide a man just where he was fired at; but as he was jogging along—not noticing much, he said, but probably half asleep in reality—he saw a flash and heard the report of a pistol. Fortunately the old horse was steady and knew the road; so he only sprang forward at a quickened pace. Had the animal shied or swerved, the driver might have been upset into the canal or hurled over the bank into the fields below—quite a sufficient height to have led to some serious fractures, if not a broken neck.

I told our man to go home and keep the affair quite quiet; went to Chaundy, and handed over the report of the occurrence to him, and told him I would take the cart and go and inspect the scene of the attempted robbery; for such, as Chaundy agreed with me, appeared to be the real solution of the matter.

I took a pair of large horse-pistols, which were kept in the chief room as a sort of demonstration of our defensive force, loaded them, borrowed a greatcoat of one of the men, and drove off to the scene of the adventure.

It was a keen, cold, but still morning. As I was whirled through the fresh air, all the cobwebs spun in the late hours at the ball were blown out of my brain, and I felt invigorated both physically and mentally. Much of the bewilderment into which the driver's story had thrown me melted, as the morning mists were doing; and by the time I reached the spot I had a pretty clear view of the case.

The poachers had waited and waited for Mr. Darke's return, in ignorance of his having taken another road, and supposing the ball to have been kept up, as had sometimes occurred, until a very late or rather early hour. About the time when the mail-cart passed, they had, however, come to abandon all expectation of falling in with Mr. Darke;

and either the sight of the mail-bags had excited their cupidity, or—as seemed more likely, no pursuit having been made—they fired the shot as a joke to alarm the postman.

When I reached the exact spot, I dismounted, and carefully examined the ground. The dew was still on the grass, but there was not a footprint to be seen on it. I went over every inch of the bank, and the border of the fields below, with as much minuteness as a well-trained pointer; then I examined the bank of the canal, and, crossing by a lock a little way below, went over the farther bank with equal care. There only remained the road to examine. No vehicle had passed over it since the previous night except the mail-cart, the tracks of whose wheels were freshly marked. As I followed them with my eye, I noticed a little spot of ground slightly blackened, and caught a glimpse of bright metal. I hastened to the place, and found a strange-looking object, made apparently with two pieces of tin or zinc which bore the traces of a recent explosion. This, then, was some clue to the mystery.

I walked along the road, scrutinising it carefully, and about twenty yards farther found another of these “infernal machines,” not exploded. Farther on, I came on the track of a child, which had crossed the road from the canal-bridge to the fields. I could see that the child had stopped in one place; for the footprints were repeated, one over the other, and there were the marks of a hand in the dust, where little fingers had scraped it in the act of picking something up. I looked across the fields and saw a small lad “keeping birds.” He was the only one astir, so I hailed him and asked him if he had found anything like what I held in my hand; and he at once produced one from his pocket, saying he found it in the road. I gave him sixpence, which was of more value to him—and safer, even supposing he laid it all out in sweets—than the explosive article I took from him.

Then I mounted the cart again and drove on towards Grasslands, but did not see anything more. In order to test whether the things I had found would sound like a pistol, I selected a safe and quiet bit of the road, laid one down, and drove over it. It exploded with a flash and sound very like a pistol. Being prepared for it, I saw whence the flash came; but the dozing driver was hardly likely to observe so much as that.

As I was driving on, I was surprised by the sudden appearance of Mr. Darke's keeper.

“Hold hard!” he cried, stopping the horse. “Was that you shooting? That's the second this morning. What have you got in the trap?”

I did not choose to explain matters to him; and he clearly suspected me of poaching, and vowed he'd take me before his master. To this I had no objection; so he jumped into the cart, and we turned round.

To make a long story short, Mr. Darke was roused, and came down, to find me virtually in custody. A few words explained how it was.

The keeper was sent away,—not without praise, though, for his vigilance,—and then I related my discovery to Mr. Darke. He at once recognised in my “infernal machines” the fog-signals in use on railways.

He insisted on my coming in and taking breakfast before I prosecuted the search farther, and I readily consented. Mary came down in a charming morning-wrapper, and presided, and—the danger being over—was told all about it.

It was determined that the mail-cart—which was an unusual conveyance, and might attract needless attention—should be put up at Grasslands, and that I should go on to the nearest railroad in Mr. Darke’s dog-cart.

On reaching the station, I found from the station-master that there was a most unpardonable carelessness about the fog-signals; they were not served out to particular men, but kept in a box accessible to anyone about the station. The plate-layers, he told me, were the men who used them oftenest; and I found that a party of them were laying fresh rails about a mile off.

I drove to the nearest point to the place he named, and made my way across country to the gang on the line. I recognised my two friends of the post-office among them; and a mode of procedure at once suggested itself to me. It was not strictly legal, perhaps, but it answered my purpose. I went to the ganger, or foreman, and told him I wanted two of his men on a charge of murder. He did not seem inclined to assist me, and told me I must help myself. Luckily I had the pistols with me. I went up to the two men, told them I was a police-officer, and that I had come to take them up on a charge of murdering Mr. Darke. They seemed a little taken aback, but denied the charge stoutly.

“You laid fog-signals on the road last night to frighten his horses, and they upset him into the canal, and he’s drowned,” said I; “so it’s murder, my lads. Come along!”

There seemed some inclination to resist the capture, so I took out the pistols.

“Look here,” said I; “if I can’t take the two I want, lads, I shall shoot the first two that come to hand; and they’ll be the first to interfere. You’d best keep quiet, all of you; for there’s a warrant out against you all for poaching,”—I saw most of them look uncomfortable at this,—“and if I give you a bad word, it will go hard with you.”

This had its effect, coupled with the appearance of the pistols; and I got my men off and marched them in front of me to the road, where I made them get into the dog-cart. The groom drove, and I sat behind with the pistols cocked; and in this form we went back to Grasslands.

I sent the porter on from the lodge, where I made an excuse for a minute or so’s delay; and by the time we reached the hall, in accord-

ance with the instructions I had given him, all the blinds were drawn down, and Mr. Darke kept out of sight.

The clergyman, who was a magistrate, was sent for; and we examined the prisoners, who broke down completely and confessed all, giving up their accomplices. They had intended to frighten the horses, as I had supposed, without thinking much about the probable consequences—except with the vague notion that they would not be guilty of murder, even if the worst happened. The stable-help turned out to be the son of one of them.

When we had terrified them sufficiently, we called in the real constables, who had been sent for, and they were given into their custody,—Mr. Darke walking in presently, much to their alarm—surprise—but ultimately satisfaction.

I have not much more to tell. On my return to the office, I found Chaundy had sent off a graphic report to head-quarters, full of blunders, exaggerations, and misstatements—being founded, in fact, solely on what the driver had said. I therefore did not utter a syllable about my doings, but quietly sent off a report of my own, enclosing a document which I had got Mr. Darke to draw up, as magistrate, to confirm my account.

The authorities placed themselves in communication with Mr. Darke; and the result was that in a week the appointment of a new postmaster to Cowford was made; and the new postmaster was not Chaundy: it was I!

I went over to thank Mr. Darke for his part in the matter. He was out; so I thanked Mary. She congratulated me on my promotion, and said she supposed I should marry now. I said no. She inquired why. I at once explained, and made a confession of my audacious love. She—well, she gave me a good reason why I *should* marry, and furthermore told me whom I was to marry—Miss Mary Darke to wit, and no other.

Mr. Darke came in soon after, and I told him all. He was furious at first; but Mary remonstrated with him for his ingratitude, and pointed out that she should be twenty-one in three months, when she should assert her right to become postmistress of Cowford. The squire relented, and we triumphed. We were married soon after Christmas-day, and have lived as happily as the prince and princess of a fairy-tale ever since.

That's how I won Polly—I always call her Polly now, because our eldest girl is called Mary; and she is three years old, and therefore must be treated with respect; and it wouldn't do to have two Marys in the house.

That, I repeat, is how I won Polly and the postmastership,—which latter I didn't keep; for the squire makes us a handsome allowance, and I am reading for the Bar. I got my father-in-law to use his influence for Chaundy, who ultimately was appointed postmaster, with a hint not to be *too* clever in future.

ACTORS IN THE GREAT PLAY

CHRISTMAS is especially at home in manor-houses and granges and country halls. Young Marston, who shot the deer at Park-hall on the First of September, says Christmas is only "Merry Christmas" in the country; and it must be confessed he has had some experience of rural jollity. But the festal season comes upon us this year too soon after the great commercial storm to warrant a repetition of sundry and several feasts at which Earl Veringo's son was present last December. The holly and the mistletoe will bring too many memories of a year ago, to prompt any thing like a genuine revival of the fun and frolic which that gentleman enjoys so boisterously.

With December the Twenty-Fifth the drop-scene falls upon an important part of the great play, and gives scope for memory and criticism and green-room gossip enough to make the time both thoughtful and unhappy. The great drama stands still; the bustle and excitement of the play have rest; and then come up thoughts of actors who are gone, and the remembrance of personal sufferings.

That first Christmas of the Crimean war,—what ghosts of dead actors seemed to flit about in the firelight of country halls and mansions; and what sad eloquence there was in the vacant chairs, at cottage firesides, where Christmas usually comes in a romping, rollicking spirit! And after the Indian mutiny,—how the sight of the green holly-branches thrilled the hearts of thousands, with pangs of bitter sorrow!

This year, Christmas bells, which rung so joyfully a year ago, will jangle strangely out of tune to the same ears. The genius of Limited Liability, like the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, has disclosed himself to his crowd of followers, and Speculative Finance has drunk of the poisoned cup.

"There, ye wise saints, behold your light, your star;
Ye *would* be dupes, and ye *are*."

But unhappily many who only sought a reasonable investment for their money have fallen amidst the wide-spread ruin; and this will limit Christmas rejoicings in country homes as well as in London houses. There are some establishments, in fashionable cities, where Christmas this year will put up no holly and burn no yule log; the leading actors have been superseded by Senior Fortune, the manager, and are gone to seek for third or fourth-rate positions on other stages.

Halting at Christmas-time, and looking back, how many men will see still plodding on in the same part, and still unsuccessful! I wish we heard a little less of those who have made their marks, and a trifle

more of those who have striven and worked in vain. Ten Christmases ago there was an old actor in life's great play, who sat under my mahogany tree at Christmas-tide, beneath the shadow of a great cathedral. He was contemporary with Wordsworth and Southey, and the friend of Mulready and Sheridan Knowles. A poet, and a man of letters, he ventured to write a play; and for years he has been trying to procure its representation. It is a standing dish, this romantic drama; over my Christmas fire years ago he recited one of its principal scenes. Year after year the disappointed old man and his unrepresented play come together to celebrate Christmas with me; and so it will be to the end of the chapter, like the man who was never destined to catch that particular perch for which he was everlastingly fishing. Some day the Christmas bells will ring, and the playwright, heeding them not, will sleep quietly on in the shadow of the old church; and then, ladies and gentlemen, his drama shall be unearthed and his merits made known: and so he plays his part.

There is Thurston, the curate of All Saints, whom I meet once a year at the Grange, with his well-brushed threadbare coat, waiting for the living that will never come. The Christmas bells only remind him how long he has played his one unthankful part to an unappreciative audience. The manager of the district bank, who does a bill occasionally for his clerical friend, he says, "Another Christmas, and I am here still, frittering away the best years of my life." And Sumter his master thinks, "Another year, and still I am out of the House; I must certainly make a successful fight at the next election."

All the time little Tom Crawford thinks of nothing but Lucy Marsden and her bright blue eyes. He vows in his heart that he certainly will be manly enough to avail himself of the privileges of the mistletoe this year; whilst Lucy wonders who her partners will be at the county ball; and mamma, with feminine adroitness, edges her way amongst society above her position, and in which she only succeeds in being very unhappy. And when Arthur Wentworth appears on the scene, Lucy will give up all thoughts of poor Tom Crawford; and a score of mammas, who would have thought Arthur beneath contempt a few years ago, will smile sweetly upon him now, and introduce him to their daughters. For Arthur Wentworth's is one of the most perfect instances of successful speculation of which I know; and in the midst of so much ruin it is quite cheering to come across a happy case of good fortune.

Arthur was educated for the bar; but after a brief career of briefless boredom he bade adieu to the Temple, and entered a commercial house in Manchester. When the American war broke out he left Cottonopolis and went to Liverpool, where he entered into partnership with a broker. A fellow of an impulsive and passionate nature, he soon quarrelled with his Liverpool partner, and cotton speculations excited his ambition in a new line of life altogether. He borrowed

a thousand pounds from his Manchester friends; and this, with a thousand pounds of his own (all the money he had in the world), he invested in cotton. In a month he paid back the thousand pounds, and had a large balance at his bankers' besides.

Then he took a share in freighting a ship to run the blockade. Here he was successful again. His next venture was a ship "all to himself;" and this added another golden triumph to the former. In the course of two years he had made sixty thousand pounds.

One morning he received information that the last ship in which he was interested had been taken by the North. This was his first loss: it amounted to fifteen thousand pounds. Now, although it is difficult to understand when that tide has come which "taken at the flood leads on to fortune," it is all the more difficult to know when it is going out. The speculator too often mistakes the first ebb as merely the precursor of a spring-flood; and on he goes again, launching more gold-freighted ships on fortune's treacherous sea. But my friend Arthur was a shrewd thoughtful fellow, despite his impulsive character, and he saw that the tide had begun to turn. He went down to his office near the Exchange, and rung his bell as usual. Jones, his head clerk, entered to learn his principal's orders.

"Good morning, Jones," said Arthur; "call Brown in."

"Yes, sir.—Mr. Brown, please to step this way," said Jones, going to the door of the front office.

"And call in Tom," said the broker, as he went on filling up some cheques.

Tom the errand-boy entered; and the three officers of the establishment stood anxiously waiting for an explanation of the master's singular behaviour.

"Mr. Jones," said Arthur at last, "you have served me well, and I thank you. Here is a cheque for two hundred pounds. I shall not require your services any longer."

Jones took the cheque with an expression of great amazement, but did not attempt to interrupt the broker as he handed another cheque to the under-clerk.

"Here is a cheque for a hundred pounds, Mr. Brown. I am going to retire from business, and you are at liberty to obtain fresh employment.—And Tom, here are ten sovereigns for you. Put up the shutters, and stick a paper on them, 'To Let.'"

Thus Arthur Wentworth shrewdly played *his* part in the world's great play; and the young ladies at the manor-house ball, where Arthur is to be a Christmas guest, will play their parts accordingly, no doubt.

So,

"Let us be merry and make good cheer;
For Christmas comes but once a year."

JOSEPH HATTON.

AT DAGGERS DRAWN

BY BABINGTON WHITE.

BUSINESS had been rather dull at the Royal Terence Theatre when Mr. Lorrain, the lessee and manager, went on a starring tour in the provinces. It was in the course of this tour he met with a man who had attained some distinction as a local favourite in the large manufacturing town of Brazenam. The man was a low comedian, and played certain characters, which he had made his own, better than Mr. Lorrain the London manager had ever seen them played before.

Mr. Lorrain happened to say as much in the green-room one evening; and the friends of Mr. Joseph Munford, the low comedian, took care to tell him what the London manager had said—the lips of a London manager being as the lips of the young person in a fairy tale, and every word that falls therefrom a jewel of purest water.

“You mind what you’re about, Joey,” said the friends of Mr. Munford, “and you’ll get an opening at the Terence. Lorrain was standing in the prompt entrance the other night when you were on in *Dingleton’s Little Dinner*, and I know he was pleased.”

“Did he laugh?” asked Mr. Munford anxiously.

“Not a bit of it; a manager never laughs when he means business. He was watching you, my boy. I had my eye upon him while you were doing that by-play with the mustard-pot; and I wouldn’t mind laying a fiver that he’ll offer you an engagement before he leaves the place.”

Mr. Munford shook his head despondently. He had acted at more than one London manager, and the London managers had beguiled him by delusive laughter. They had applauded his business with the mustard-pot, and had straightway gone away and forgotten him. The fact that the manager of the Terence had not laughed was perhaps a favourable symptom; but Joseph Munford steeled his heart against the flatteries of that false charmer, Hope. He found himself watching the prompt entrance, nevertheless, during the remainder of the London manager’s engagement; and on several occasions he perceived that gentleman ostensibly engaged in conversation with the prompter, but obviously interested by the business of the stage.

“I wonder whether he does mean anything?” Joseph Munford asked himself anxiously. Life was a somewhat difficult business for the local favourite, who had given hostages to Fortune in the shape of a wife and six children, and who found the healthy appetites of the hostages press rather heavily upon him now and then. The salary of a provincial favourite, be he never so beloved of pit and gallery, does not afford

a very liberal income for a family of eight; and actors are such imprudent people, that a man with a wife and six children rarely manages to secure a provision for his old age out of a weekly stipend of three guineas. Mr. Munford was wont to remark with doleful facetiousness that he found three pound three an uncommonly tight fit.

While Joseph Munford steeled himself against the insidious flatteries of the enchantress Hope, Mr. Lorrain of the Terence deliberated with himself after the following fashion :

“The fellow is certainly funny—rather broad perhaps; but he'd tone that down a little, I daresay, for a London audience. I really think he might draw. But then there's Tayte. Wouldn't it make Tayte angry if I engaged anyone likely to interfere with him! However, I can't help that. Business has been very flat for a long time, and I really think people are beginning to get tired of Tayte—*toujours perdrix*, and all that kind of thing. I fancy the public would like Tayte all the better if they saw rather less of him. At any rate I can but try the experiment.”

The result of this deliberation was the engagement of Mr. Munford for the Royal Terence Theatre, at a salary of six guineas a week. He would gladly have accepted four; but Mr. Lorrain was a liberal man, willing to give twelve honest pence for an honest shilling's-worth, and above trying to obtain his shilling's-worth for elevenpence halfpenny.

If an unknown uncle had suddenly revealed his existence by dying and leaving Joseph Munford half a million of money, the low comedian could scarcely have been more elated than he was by the engagement for the Terence. His wildest ambition was realised. He was going to play Dingleton before a London audience; he was going to tread the boards made slippery by the soles of the great Tayte—the favourite of favourites—the man on whom the mantle of Liston had descended.

Mr. Munford had a considerable opinion of his own merits, and he had battered on the praises of local admirers; but there were times when his soul sank within him as he thought that he was to enter the lists against the mighty Tayte; and he said as much to his friends and comrades at the snug little tavern next door to the theatre.

His friends bade him be of good cheer. They laughed to scorn his apprehension of failure.

“Let Tayte look to his laurels,” they exclaimed, “when you make your first appearance as Dingleton. Tayte is a very good actor; but the London public have never seen anything like your by-play with the mustard-pot.”

Joseph Munford gave his friends a farewell supper at the snug little tavern, and departed; carrying with him the seven hostages and all those eccentric wigs, dropsical gingham umbrellas, impossible swallow-tailed coats, preposterous plaid trousers, outrageous satin waistcoats, and fluffy beaver-hats, which had long been the delight of his local admirers and the pride of his own heart.

He took lodgings for himself and his hostages in the neighbourhood of the Terence Theatre. The consciousness of his improved circumstances made him just a little extravagant; and his prudent wife looked around her with awe-stricken glances when she beheld the splendours of her new abode.

"O Joseph," she cried, "the carpet is brussels, and quite new; and look at those green-glass candlesticks on the mantelpiece; I'm afraid the rent must be *enormous*."

As a sudden thunderclap that startles a drowsy traveller amidst the sultry calm of a summer's day came the intelligence of Joseph Munford's engagement on the illustrious Tayte. He saw the new farce, *Dingleton's Little Dinner*, underlined in the bills of the theatre, and shrugged his shoulders.

"More study for me," he grumbled. "I wonder what the consciences of managers are made of. When shall I have a little rest, I should like to know? I haven't been out of the bill since Christmas; and I don't think it does a man any good to be so much before the public."

It is the speciality of popular low comedians to grumble; but those who best knew Mr. Tayte knew that he was very fond of acting, and would ill have brooked a rival near his throne. When it did transpire that *Dingleton's Little Dinner* was intended to introduce a provincial favourite to the London public, the countenance of Tayte was terrible to behold. The fact burst upon him when he read the cast, which had been put up over the green-room mantelpiece. He stood upon the hearth-rug for five minutes by the green-room clock, staring at the document with a fixity of gaze that was almost apoplectic, and breathing stertorously.

"And who is MR. MUNFORD?" he demanded presently in an awful voice, pointing to the obnoxious name on the little slip of paper.

Nobody in the green-room professed to know anything about Mr. Munford. Perhaps anyone who had known the particulars of the new engagement would have shrunk from imparting his knowledge to the outraged Tayte.

"I'll ask Lorrain what it all means," he said presently; and in due course Mr. Tayte had an interview with his manager—an interview at which no third person was present. It was rumoured that Tayte had been seen to issue from the Treasury pale of visage, and clutching the slim silk umbrella of private life with a convulsive grasp; and that was all. It was observed that during the fortnight preceding the first appearance of Munford, Tayte played with a feverish energy; that he, the past master in the art of "gagging," indulged in even wilder gags than were usual to him; that he surpassed himself in the science of "mugging;" and that he contrived thereby to keep the audience in a continuous roar of laughter from his entrance to his exit. He seemed to derive a grim kind of satisfaction from this fact; but his counte-

nance as he stood at the wings waiting for his cue was very dark and repellent, and his oldest friends were afraid to speak to him. Two or three toadies and sycophants ventured to hint that this obscure provincial person Munford was sure to be a failure; but Mr. Tayte turned upon these flatterers with an unwonted ferocity.

"Who told you I was afraid of Mr. Munford?" he said; "I have held my own in this house for nine years and a half, and I daresay I shall manage to hold my own a year or two longer."

There was not much in the words: but with such men as Tayte the tone is everything; and there was a crushing irony in the tone.

Dingleton's Little Dinner was performed, and the new comedian's début was eminently successful. All the papers concurred in the opinion that Mr. Munford was an acquisition to the company at the Terence; and all the papers concurred in praising the by-play with the mustard-pot. Mr. Tayte studiously avoided seeing the new comedian, but he heard the laughter of the audience as he dressed to go home after the first piece; and the dresser who attended upon him beheld his flexible lips shape themselves into the monosyllable "FOOLS!" as the loudest of those peals of laughter reached him. He made a point of reading the papers the next morning; and his lips shaped themselves into the same form as he read of the business with the mustard-pot.

Dingleton's Little Dinner had a triumphant run; and Joseph Munford's success became an established fact. It was not to be supposed, however, that the audience of the Terence were in any way inconstant to their old favourite. The great Tayte was playing one of his most uproariously funny characters in the piece which formed the chief feature of the evening's entertainment. Roars of laughter greeted his entrances and followed his exits. He went up in a balloon; he was caught in the rain attired in dancing-pumps and a swallow-tailed coat; he hid himself in a cupboard where there were jam-pots and pickle-jars, and emerged therefrom bedabbled with treacle; he had his head jammed between area-railings when in the act of listening to a conversation between two servant-maids, and kept the audience enraptured for five consecutive minutes by means of his facial contortions while in that attitude;—and what more could the heart of a low comedian desire?

The desires of a low comedian are not easily satisfied. The great Tayte hankered after that business with the mustard-pot, and grudged those peals of laughter which he heard every night while he was exchanging a suit of scarlet-and-green tartan and a red scratch-wig for the sombre attire of every-day life.

Although he took very good care not to see Mr. Munford in the part of Dingleton, he could not avoid occasional encounters with the comedian at the wings or in the green-room. The two men looked at each other with that stony ferocity of expression to be seen in the

countenances of rival cats who stand a few paces apart, glaring at each other, stiff and statue-like, on the steps of an area.

"Morning," said Munford. "Cold, ain't it?"

"Yes," replied Tayte, "almost as cold as the audience last night when you were playing Dingleton."

"Ah," answered Munford, "you see I don't go in for area-rails and tartan trousers."

"No," cried Tayte; "you go in for mustard-pots."

And then the rivals turned upon their heels, each man thinking he had been witty. Mr. Lorrain the manager did his best to soften the feelings of the old favourite.

"You can't suppose I want to put anyone over your head, Tayte," he said; and again Mr. Tayte's breathing became stertorous. "I thought this fellow would be useful to pull up the half-price; and I'm sure you get the lion's share. Do be civil to him, Tayte. He's not a bad fellow, when you come to know him. We've been such a snug little family party in this house, that it goes against me to see two of my company at daggers drawn."

"At daggers drawn!" cried Tayte ferociously. "Daggers be ——! Do you suppose I'm afraid of such a fellow as that? Why, I pity him."

"Pity him, Tayte! What for?" asked the manager innocently.

"Because you've done him the worst injury you could possibly do him by bringing him up to London," said Tayte. "That business with the mustard-pot goes because it's new. Wait till he plays in another piece. Mark my words, Lorrain—and I speak without prejudice—when he does, the audience will drop him like a hot potato."

"Very likely you're right, Tayte," Mr. Lorrain answered meekly. And this was mean of him, for he fully believed that Tayte was wrong.

The event proved that the manager had judged wisely. Joseph Munford played in other pieces, and the half-price approved of him. A drama was produced by and bye in which there were parts for the two low comedians. Each man thought his rival's part better than his own; each man watched his rival, and counted the peals of laughter extorted from the unconscious audience. Tayte still held his ground as leading favourite of the Terence; and there was neither wavering nor inconstancy in the minds of his audience. But there are monarchs who will endure no second power in the state; and a popular low comedian is of the same arbitrary temper.

Tayte was compelled to witness the performance of Munford now that the two men played in the same piece and were on the stage together; but on no occasion had the greater man been beguiled to smile at the buffooneries of the lesser man. The audience might be convulsed with laughter, the rest of the actors might abandon themselves freely to mirth; but let the drolleries of Munford be never so humorous, the countenance of Tayte was as a visage hewn out of stone.

The rival comedians met in the green-room every night during the run of the new drama; and as a London green-room is a grand place for talk, it is not to be supposed that either of the two could keep perpetual silence. Then arose those arguments and disputations which fully justified the general idea that Tayte and Munford were at daggers drawn. On no possible point would these two men agree. In politics, in theology, in literature, their ideas appeared wide as the poles asunder. If Munford gave expression to sentiments of a radical character, Tayte became on the instant a staunch conservative. If Munford showed himself an orthodox Christian, Tayte boldly propounded doctrines which would have been too much for Voltaire or Tom Paine. If Munford spoke with enthusiasm of Garrick, Tayte proclaimed his conviction that the only decent actor of that period was Barry. If Munford recited a verse of Moore or Byron, Tayte planted himself beneath the banner of Wordsworth, and loudly averred that no poet had ever produced a more thrilling composition than the idyl of the damsel who dwelt beside the banks of Dove.

The audience of the green-room looked on and listened, and enjoyed the fray. The antagonism between the two men gave a zest to everyday life in the Terence; and on Saturday morning, when there was a good deal of lounging and idleness outside the treasury-door, the fun was almost riotous.

Munford held his own bravely, but he complained bitterly to his own particular friends. "That man would crush me if he had the power," he said; "I really think he would like to cut my throat."

And indeed there were times when Mr. Tayte felt as if he might have derived a grisly satisfaction from the act of hacking asunder his rival's jugular vein with an indifferent razor.

Things went on in this fashion for nearly a year, when all of a sudden Munford fell ill, and the farce in which he had been playing was withdrawn. A farce of Tayte's was reproduced, and once more Tayte had the burden of the half-price on his shoulders.

Did this state of affairs afford satisfaction to the mind of Tayte? He little knows the soul of a popular low comedian who would suppose so. When Tayte heard for the first time of Munford's illness, he drew his shoulders up to his ears, and indulged in one of those facial contortions for which he was renowned.

"Ill, is he?" said he; "I think I can guess the nature of his indisposition. The new farce, *Coals and Potatoes*—a literal translation from the last Palais-Royal absurdity, *Un Marchand de Charbon*, by the way—was a failure, sir; a frost bitter and bleak as the February of 1814, when there were live oxen roasted on the Thames; and Munford is shamming ill in order to get out of the part. He's an artful card, my child, and knows the audience are tired of him. When the houses pick up again, Munford will pick up again; mark my words."

This was the second occasion on which Mr. Tayte had requested

that his statements in reference to Mr. Munford might be noted ; and again the event proved that he had been wrong.

Joseph Munford's illness was not an affair of a few days or of a few weeks. He languished and drooped week after week and month after month. Again and again there was talk about his returning to the theatre, and one of his pieces was announced for performance ; but again and again the doctor interfered at the last moment, and declared that it must not be. Poor Munford was wont to sigh wearily when people talked of his reappearance.

" I begin to think I shall never play Dingleton again," he said.

His wife did her uttermost to console him, though very sad at heart herself. She reminded him how great he had been in the by-play with the mustard-pot, and how on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion in the provinces—his benefit—the mustard-pot business had been encored by an uproarious audience.

For four months Joseph Munford had been an invalid ; for four months Mr. Lorrain the manager had sent him his salary every Saturday without question, as ungrudgingly as if the sick man had been working his hardest at the theatre. At the end of the fourth month, however, Mr. Lorrain called on the invalid, and told him, as kindly as it was possible to impart unpleasant tidings, that at the end of one more month the salary must cease, unless the actor should be well enough to return to his duties.

" If the season had been a good one, God knows I wouldn't grudge your screw, Joe," said the manager ; " but you know yourself I have been losing money. After next month you must see what your friends can do for you."

Unhappily Joseph Munford had no friends, or none capable of giving him substantial assistance in the hour of need. He did not tell the manager this ; for he knew that he had been generously treated, and to sponge on generosity is no attribute of the Thespian mind.

" You've been very good to me, Lorrain," he said ; " and I shall never forget your goodness. If I am ever to act again, I ought to be able to act before the month is out."

Mr. Lorrain looked mournfully at the wasted figure and haggard pinched face. Alas, it seemed very improbable that the weak creature propped up by pillows and sustained by doctor's stuff would ever again make mirth for a delighted pit !

And were the two low comedians still at daggers drawn now that one of them lay on a sick-bed ? Ah, he little knows the heart of a comedian who fancies that Tayte's hatred endured when the object of it had such need of tenderness and compassion. For the man who had made a hit in *Dingleton's Little Dinner*, the favourite of the Terence had no feeling but aversion ; for poor Joey Munford languishing in a London lodging James Tayte had nothing but pity and love. There were many who were kind to the sick man ; but the old port which warmed

his poor sad heart, the hothouse grapes which cooled his poor parched lips, the comic periodicals which beguiled him into feeble laughter, were paid for out of the coffers of James Tayte.

Nor did Tayte confine his benevolent offices to such small gifts. He gave that which is grudged by many who will bestow hothouse grapes or rare old wines with liberal hands. He gave his sometime rival time and trouble. The atmosphere of a sick-room is apt to be stifling, the society of a sick man is apt to be depressing; but when Tayte had a leisure hour before a late piece, or after an early piece, or in the pauses of a long rehearsal, it was his habit to run round to the invalid's lodgings for an hour's chat, or a hand of cribbage, as the case might be; and nothing so revived the spirits of Joseph Munford as one of these visits from his nightly rival.

"I used to hate you like poison when you played Dingleton," said Tayte frankly; "and I shall hate you like poison again when you come back to the *slum*. But in the mean time let's be friends, old fellow, and take life pleasantly."

And then Tayte showed his big white teeth in a grin which would have extorted a laugh from Socrates after he had taken the hemlock.

It was in the dark and dispiriting month of November that the manager of the Terence gave notice that in four more weeks he must needs stop the sick man's salary. The four weeks went by on the wings of the wind, and Joseph Munford was no better fitted for a return to his duties. He knew and felt that he was weaker and worse than when Mr. Lorrain had last called upon him. He appealed piteously to the doctor for comfort, and the doctor murmured something hopeful about next summer. Next summer! And it was December. There were five or six weary months to be lived through somehow or other, with seven hostages given to Fortune, and no visible means of subsistence. Christmas was near at hand too; and that seemed to make it worse, poor Mrs. Munford said pathetically. Indeed the rich do well to be open-handed and pitiful at Christmas time; for many a dole in the way of beef and blankets, and wine and tea, and coals and flannel, are needed to compensate the poor hungry ones for the bitter thoughts that *must* arise when the haggard eyes peer wonderingly in on the Christmas fruits and Christmas dainties, the toys and trinkets, the holiday food and holiday raiment, glittering and twinkling in the light of many lamps.

As that time drew near, and the last shilling of his last sovereign melted away, Joseph Munford's fortitude abandoned him. His poor aching head fell upon his wife's shoulder, and he wept aloud.

"I know it's weak and childish, Mary Anne," he said; "but I can't help it. I'm a mean hound; but there's only one hope: I must appeal to Lorrain, and ask him to let the salary go on a few weeks longer. It won't be more than a few weeks, I'm afraid, Polly."

And then the two poor creatures wept together; while the muffin-

bell went tinkling cheerily down the street, and the twinkling lights shot up in the December dusk, like so many flaming daggers piercing a blanket of fog.

If it had rested with Joseph Munford to entreat the manager's charity with his own lips, he could never have shaped them into the prayer. He relied on the influence of Tayte, the established favourite, who was known to be a power in the theatre.

"Tayte is a noble fellow, and I know he'll plead for me," said Munford.

But when Tayte heard what was required of him he shook his head dejectedly.

"I'll ask if you like, Joe," he said; "but, upon my word, I don't think it's any use. Lorrain has behaved very handsomely to you, old boy, you see; and business has been so confoundedly bad, you know, since—"

"I know I oughtn't to ask it," replied the other piteously; "but I must die of starvation if the salary stops. I'm in debt as it is, and everything is so dear, and the children eat so. By heavens, Tayte, you can't conceive the amount six children can devour! If it was likely to be for long, I wouldn't ask it; but it won't be for long."

Tayte murmured something to the effect that so far as an occasional pound or so would go, Munford might rely upon him; and then departed, compelled, despite his better reason, to assume some show of hope, so heart-piercing was the despair of his friend.

The interview with the manager was a painful one, though no manager could have shown more feeling than Mr. Lorrain.

"I put it to you, Tayte," he said, "whether I am bound to continue the salary. You know how bad business has been since Easter, and you know I've been paying that poor fellow six guineas a week for the last five months, during which time he hasn't set his foot inside the theatre. He ought to have saved a little—he really ought, you know."

Tayte dropped a word or two about "six children" and "doctor's bills." But Mr. Lorrain shook his head.

"Munford had only three guineas a week at Brazenam," he said, "and he might have saved something since he has been with me. I'm very sorry for the poor fellow; and so far as a sovereign now and then will go, I—" And he unconsciously echoed the words of Tayte.

Very heavy was the heart of the comedian as he went to the street near the Strand that evening after the first piece. He knew how bitter the interval of suspense must have been to the actor's penniless household; he knew how much more bitter would be the tidings which he had to impart.

He was obliged to walk up and down the street once or twice before he had courage to knock at the door. Mrs. Munford came out to meet him on the landing-place, and her look went to his heart.

"He's very low to-night," she said, as she opened the door of the sick-room. "O, dear Mr. Tayte, I hope you bring us good news!"

Tayte could not answer her. He made a little choking noise,—which might have been a fortune to him if he could have done it in serio-comedy,—and went into the sick-chamber. Munford was lying back upon the pillows pale as ashes: but he started up as his friend entered, as if galvanised into life.

"Poor lad!" thought Tayte sadly; "I think he's about right. Lorraine might have let the salary go on; it wouldn't have been for long."

"Well?" gasped Munford hoarsely. And then he cried in a faint voice: "O Tayte, there's good news in your face! It's all right, isn't it? Ah, Tayte, dear old fellow, say it's all right!"

Tayte looked fixedly at that white wan face, in which the agony of suspense was so painfully visible.

"Yes," he said at last, drawing a long breath; "it's all right, dear boy. You're to have the salary."

"God bless him for it!" cried Munford; "and you too."

He could say no more, but covered his face with the bed-clothes, and wept aloud.

It was a grand sight to see Tayte seated by the bed, and patting the counterpane as if his late rival had been a wakeful baby.

"Cheer up, old fellow," he said; "you'll play Dingleton again, and I shall hate you again, depend upon it."

Joseph Munford did not live to reappear as Dingleton, but he lingered for many months, now better, now worse; and on every Saturday during those months Tayte took him six guineas, neatly packed in white paper and sealed with a business-like seal. This was rather a hard pull upon Tayte, who had himself given hostages to Fortune. He was observed to wear a shabby overcoat during that spring, and to ride in omnibuses when a nobler-minded man would have ridden in cabs—whereupon his intimate enemies were very sarcastic on the subject of his meanness.

"Don't say anything to Lorraine about the salary when he calls upon you," the arch-hypocrite said once; "he told me he'd rather you didn't mention it to him. It's a false delicacy of his, you know; but you may as well give way to it."

So when Mr. Lorraine called at Munford's lodgings, bringing the sick man wine, or fruit, or flowers, no mention was made of the salary. There were only vague protestations of affection and gratitude on the part of the actor, which the manager had fairly won by liberality in the past and kindly sympathy in the present.

At last the day came when the Farce was to be finished, and the curtain to be dropped. The doctor told Munford that the end was very near; and the dying comedian bade good-bye to the poor faithful wife who had hoped such bright things for him.

"I think your sister Susan will be kind to you and the little ones, Polly, when I'm gone," he said. "She set her face against my profession; but I believe she's a good Christian, though she does come it just a little too strong about the wickedness of her fellow-creatures. She can't set her face against a poor friendless widow and six fatherless children. And then there's Lorrain, we know *he's* a trump; and I'm sure he'll do what he can for you; and Tayte is a good fellow too in his way, and he'll stand your friend."

This the comedian said in faint gasps, with a wan smile upon his lips, and tears in his eyes, while his wife sat by his bedside with her hand locked in his.

"I think they'd give you a benefit at Brazenam, Mary," he said after a pause; "and it would be a bumper. Do you remember my reception the last time I played Dingleton down there?"

On this bitter day Tayte boldly turned his back upon an important rehearsal. The poor wife was worse than useless, and in this sad extremity Tayte was the nurse as well as the comforter of his fading friend. The manager of the Terence heard how matters were, and came without delay to the sick-chamber.

He found Joseph Munford lying asleep with his head on Tayte's arm, while the popular favourite sat by the bed a statue of patience.

"This is a change indeed, Tayte," said Mr. Lorrain in a whisper; "you and he used to be at daggers drawn."

"I only wish there was any chance of our being at daggers drawn again," Tayte answered with a stifled sob.

The sound woke the sick man. He looked up with a start, and recognised the manager.

"Give me your hand, Lorrain," he said; "thank God you've come in time to hear me say it. I thank and bless you with all my heart for your goodness to me and mine in the last six months."

"Don't say that, my dear Munford," said the manager, taking the wasted hand in his very tenderly; "I've done little enough, but God knows how it went against me to refuse you the salary last Christmas."

"Refuse! You refused?"

"Business had been so bad, you see, my dear boy," murmured the manager.

Joseph Munford turned his dying eyes on Tayte, down whose cheeks big tears were rolling thick and fast.

"James Tayte," he cried, "I did not think there was so good a man upon this earth!"

He groped feebly for the hand of his benefactor, found it, pressed it to his lips, and, kissing it, died.

NEW-YEAR'S DAY

BEFORE we examine into the custom of presenting gifts on the new year—a custom which has existed from olden times—let us take a retrospective view of the various epochs that were fixed upon for the commencement of the year previous to the establishment of the present calendar.

Under the kings of France of the first race the year began on the 1st of March; under those of the second, on Christmas-day; whilst under the third, it dated from Easter. It is the general opinion among authors that the 1st of January was not fixed upon for the commencement of the year until the sixteenth century, under Charles IX. This is a grave error, which it is important to correct.

In the fourteenth century the new year already dated from the 1st of January. This may be ascertained from the dedication placed at the opening of the Memoirs of Christine de Pisan, who wrote at the end of that century: "To the said much-revered prince, my Lord of Burgundy, on my part a new-year's gift, presented the first day of January, which we call new-year's day."

To this important fact we will add two extracts from the accounts or bills at the hotel of King Charles VI., kept from the 1st of October 1380 to the 1st of July 1381:

"Raoullet le Gay, for offerings made by the King at High Mass at the Sainte-Chapelle of the Palace the first day of the year; sent to him by the said Raoullet, Tuesday, *the first day of January*, to the King at the Palace, money, 4s. 4d. p."

"Jehannin Bricon, intendant of the chapel, Mons. de Valois, for offerings of the said lord made at High Mass on the first day of the year to the canons of the Bois de Vincennes; sent to him by the said Bricon, Wednesday, the second day of January."

These dates were doubtless not generally established; and it is not to be denied that Charles IX. was the first who conceived the idea of publishing an edict decreeing that from henceforth the year should begin on the 1st of January. This decree, which was issued from the castle of Roussillon, in Dauphiny, the 15th of August 1564, and registered at the Parliament the 19th of December, only came into force throughout France in 1567.

Fifteen years later a more important modification was made in the calendar. This was the Gregorian reform that corrected the Julian year, which, being rather longer than the real year, has ended by losing ten days; so that in 1582 the spring equinox, instead of happening on the 20th of March, fell really on the 10th of that month. To equalise

the time better, three leap years were omitted in four centuries. It was also decided, in order to bring back the equinox to the 20th of March, that ten days should be taken from the current year, and that the 5th of October should be the 15th. This reform was not adopted by Russia and Greece, and was only accepted in England in 1752.

Macrobius, who has written eight books on the Roman calends—the *Saturnalia*, the *Opalia*, the *Sigillaria*, &c.—says that these solemnities commenced about the middle of December, *Saturnalia* XIV. *Kalendarum solita celebrari*; a date corresponding to the 19th of that month. Each of these festivals had its especial characteristics. Thus the *Opalia* were consecrated to the earth; and to the *Sigillaria* were presented statuettes and medals. There was also the festival of the winter solstice, *les étrennes*, &c.

The custom of *étrennes* was adopted by the Gauls, with all the greater facility that the 1st of January was with them a religious festival. The high priest of the Druids cut on that day the sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle. It was this custom, no doubt, that gave to the new-year's gifts the names of *guillenheus*, *haguilenne*, *aguilaneuf*, or *au gus l'an neuf*, which are still to be found in ballads sung in the Gaulic provinces.

Before the reign of Charles IX., although the year only began at Easter, new-year's gifts were given on the 1st of January. We find a proof of this in an item in the catalogue of the library of the Duc de Berry. It is as follows: "A large book of *Valerius Flaccus*, illuminated, furnished with four silver clasps, enamelled with the arms of his lordship, which Jean Couran sent him as a new-year's gift the first day of January 1401."

The Saxon laws gave the month of January the name of *Wolfmonth*, because at this period of the year famished wolves entered the towns and attacked children, and even men. At a later time the Britons or Druids gave presents on new-year's day of figs and dates enveloped in gilded leaves. Henry III. and Edward IV. obliged their subjects to make them presents of great value on the new year. In the reign of Henry VIII., Bishop Latimer gave the king, instead of the usual present of a purse of gold, a copy of the New Testament, with a leaf turned down at chapter xiii. of the Epistle to the Hebrews, verse 4: "Marriage is honourable for all; but God will judge the adulterer."

Queen Elizabeth always demanded rich presents from her nobles and courtiers. Oranges stuck with cloves and other spices were given; and the ladies of the fifteenth century were well pleased to receive pins, for at that time they had only wooden hooks with which to fasten their dresses. They sometimes accepted money instead of pins, from which originated *pin-money*—an annual sum husbands are in the habit of giving their wives for their private expenses.

At another period it was usual to give gloves on new-year's day. A lady gave a pair of gloves with forty pieces of gold in the lining to Sir

Thomas More, who had decided a lawsuit in her favour. Sir Thomas wrote a letter of thanks to the lady, in which he said, "It would be contrary to good manners to refuse the new-year's gift of a lady, but be pleased to present the lining elsewhere."

In the United States, on new-year's day, no ladies are to be seen in the streets. In France ladies content themselves with sending about innumerable cards; while in America they are more polite, and stay at home to receive visits from eight o'clock in the morning until midnight, and sometimes even later. The ladies of each household remain in the drawing-room in full evening dress; the younger ones by their side, also in ball costume. A sideboard elegantly laid out, and amply furnished with cold fowl, ham, pâtés, fruit-tarts, and cakes of every description, is placed at the disposal of the visitors, with choice wines and liqueurs. It is the understood custom not to refuse the invitation of the mistress of the house to partake of some refreshment, were it only a glass of madeira and a biscuit. The single glasses of madeira, however, continuing to be taken throughout the day, form a very considerable total, often visible in the flushed faces of the most respectable gentlemen. But "these ladies are so fascinating," says the lively Oscar Cornettant, who has mixed for three years in the best society of the New World, "that it is impossible to refuse them anything."

The new year is one of the principal festivals of the Jews; but it would be no easy matter to give a clear idea of it, so complicated are their ceremonies. It is not without reason that one of their rabbis has said, "Were the entire sky parchment, the seas ink, the trees pens, I could not describe all the customs and usages of the Jews."

In China, says the *Journal pour Tous*, the return of the year is celebrated by festivities. The first month is named *Yat-Youit*.* At its approach both rich and poor lay aside all business, and give themselves up to visiting the temples and theatres, and to feasting. On new-year's eve all pending business must be settled to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. The authority of the mandarins is suspended; and it may easily be supposed that at the settlement of accounts serious disorders almost always ensue.

The Persians have also, under the name of *Nourouz*, their festival of the new year. This ceremony—founded by Djemschid, who regulated the solar year in Persia—takes place when the sun enters the sign of the Ram, that is to say, in the month of March. It is celebrated with much pomp and enthusiasm. This reciprocal exchange of gifts in Persia extends to every class of society. People greet one another with an offering in their hand, saying, "*Ayd-morback*"—an expression equivalent to our wishes for "a happy new year."

* This month corresponds with the middle of our February.





C. J. Stanham del.

A CHRISTMAS VISION.

W. L. Thompson

A CHRISTMAS VISION

RED gleams the light from many a pointed casement,
Red on the cold white snow ;
Loud rings the Christmas mirth from roof to basement ;
The dancers come and go.

Now Beauty's shadow flickers on the curtain,
Now Childhood's form flits by ;
Like phantom figures changeful and uncertain
To one lone wanderer's eye.

Ah, what sad music seems that merry measure
To that child-wand'rer's ear!
How distant seem those sounds of mirth and pleasure !
How strange the Christmas cheer!

He crouches shivering in profound dejection
Beneath the wintry night ;
But little knows he of home's fond affection,
Or childhood's pure delight.

Afar he hears the Christmas joy-bells ringing,
Mixed with the children's mirth ;
Clear floats the sound of fresh young voices singing
Athwart the frost-bound earth.

"Ah, not for me," he cries, "the festive gladness,
For me no Christmas kiss ;
I sit without the door, in pain and sadness,
To hear the children's bliss.

"They say God doth the homeless orphans cherish
With fond and tender care ;
Ah, why then doth He leave me here to perish
Alone in my despair?"

Lo, as he murmurs, slumber creepeth o'er him,
On the cold earth he lies ;
While midst the snow a Vision comes before him
Out of the opened skies.

A CHRISTMAS VISION

The fair young Christ, in His supernal splendour,
Smiles on that friendless boy ;
"Ah, come," He cries in accents fondly tender,
"And I will give thee joy.

"This earth's best pleasures are but false and hollow,
Fair fruits, with bitter core ;
O weary wanderer, come, My footsteps follow
To Heaven's eternal shore.

"In that far country shall thy kindred greet thee ;
There shall thy mother come
With outstretch'd arms and loving smiles to meet thee,
And bid thee welcome home.

"There shalt thou hear the hymns of angels pealing
Amidst the starry spheres ;
There for thy aching limbs find waters healing,
There balm for all thy tears.

"Heed not those sounds of earthly music blending
Its measure with thy sleep ;
In My bright home is harmony unending—
There shalt thou Christmas keep."

Lo, in the morning, when men oped the portal,
They found the orphan—dead !
And who shall doubt that in the realm immortal
His Christmas Feast was spread ?

EVELINE'S VISITANT

A Ghost Story

BY THE EDITOR

It was at a masked ball at the Palais Royal that my fatal quarrel with my first cousin André de Brissac began. The quarrel was about a woman. The women who followed the footsteps of Philip of Orleans were the causes of many such disputes; and there was scarcely one fair head in all that glittering throng which, to a man versed in social histories and mysteries, might not have seemed bedabbled with blood.

I shall not record the name of her for love of whom André de Brissac and I crossed one of the bridges, in the dim August dawn, on our way to the waste ground beyond the church of Saint-Germain des Près.

There were many beautiful vipers in those days, and she was one of them. I can feel the chill breath of that August morning blowing in my face, as I sit in my dismal chamber at my château of Puy Verdun to-night, alone in the stillness, writing the strange story of my life. I can see the white mist rising from the river, the grim outline of the Châtelet, and the square towers of Notre Dame black against the pale gray sky. Even more vividly can I recall André's fair young face, as he stood opposite to me with his two friends—scoundrels both, and alike eager for that unnatural fray. We were a strange group to be seen in a summer sunrise, all of us fresh from the heat and clamour of the Regent's saloons—André, in a quaint hunting-dress copied from a family portrait at Puy Verdun, I costumed as one of Law's Mississippi Indians; the other men in like garish frippery, adorned with broideries and jewels that looked wan in the pale light of dawn.

Our quarrel had been a fierce one—a quarrel which could have but one result, and that the direst. I had struck him; and the welt raised by my open hand was crimson upon his fair womanish face as he stood opposite to me. The eastern sun shone on the face presently, and dyed the cruel mark with a deeper red; but the sting of my own wrongs was fresh, and I had not yet learned to despise myself for that brutal outrage.

To André de Brissac such an insult was most terrible. He was the favourite of Fortune, the favourite of women; and I was nothing,—a rough soldier who had done my country good service, but in the bonndoir of a Parabère a mannerless boor.

We fought, and I wounded him mortally. Life had been very sweet for him; and I think that a frenzy of despair took possession of him when he felt the life-blood ebbing away. He beckoned me to him as he lay on the ground. I went, and knelt at his side.

"Forgive me, André!" I murmured.

He took no more heed of my words than if that piteous entreaty had been the idle ripple of the river near at hand.

"Listen to me, Hector de Brissac," he said. "I am not one who believes that a man has done with earth because his eyes glaze and his jaw stiffens. They will bury me in the old vault at Puy Verdun; and you will be master of the château. Ah, I know how lightly they take things in these days, and how Dubois will laugh when he hears that *Ca* has been killed in a duel. They will bury me, and sing masses for my soul; but you and I have not finished our affair yet, my cousin. I will be with you when you least look to see me,—I, with this ugly scar upon the face that women have praised and loved. I will come to you when your life seems brightest. I will come between you and all that you hold fairest and dearest. My ghostly hand shall drop a poison in your cup of joy. My shadowy form shall shut the sunlight from your life. Men with such iron will as mine can do what they please, Hector de Brissac. It is my will to haunt you when I am dead."

All this in short broken sentences he whispered into my ear. I had need to bend my ear close to his dying lips; but the iron will of André de Brissac was strong enough to do battle with Death, and I believe he said all he wished to say before his head fell back upon the velvet cloak they had spread beneath him, never to be lifted again.

As he lay there, you would have fancied him a fragile stripling, too fair and frail for the struggle called life; but there are those who remember the brief manhood of André de Brissac, and who can bear witness to the terrible force of that proud nature.

I stood looking down at the young face with that foul mark upon it; and God knows I was sorry for what I had done.

Of those blasphemous threats which he had whispered in my ear I took no heed. I was a soldier, and a believer. There was nothing absolutely dreadful to me in the thought that I had killed this man. I had killed many men on the battle-field; and this one had done me cruel wrong.

My friends would have had me cross the frontier to escape the consequences of my act; but I was ready to face those consequences, and I remained in France. I kept aloof from the court, and received a hint that I had best confine myself to my own province. Many masses were chanted in the little chapel of Puy Verdun for the soul of my dead cousin, and his coffin filled a niche in the vault of our ancestors.

His death had made me a rich man; and the thought that it was so made my newly-acquired wealth very hateful to me. I lived a lonely existence in the old château, where I rarely held converse with any but the servants of the household, all of whom had served my cousin, and none of whom liked me.

It was a hard and bitter life. It galled me, when I rode through the village, to see the peasant-children shrink away from me. I have

seen old women cross themselves stealthily as I passed them by. Strange reports had gone forth about me; and there were those who whispered that I had given my soul to the Evil One as the price of my cousin's heritage. From my boyhood I had been dark of visage and stern of manner; and hence, perhaps, no woman's love had ever been mine. I remember my mother's face in all its changes of expression; but I can remember no look of affection that ever shone on me. That other woman, beneath whose feet I laid my heart, was pleased to accept my homage, but she never loved me; and the end was treachery.

I had grown hateful to myself, and had well-nigh begun to hate my fellow-creatures, when a feverish desire seized upon me, and I pined to be back in the press and throng of the busy world once again. I went back to Paris, where I kept myself aloof from the court, and where an angel took compassion upon me.

She was the daughter of an old comrade, a man whose merits had been neglected, whose achievements had been ignored, and who sulked in his shabby lodging like a rat in a hole, while all Paris went mad with the Scotch Financier, and gentlemen and lacqueys were trampling one another to death in the Rue Quincampoix. The only child of this little cross-grained old captain of dragoons was an incarnate sunbeam, whose mortal name was Eveline Duchalet.

She loved me. The richest blessings of our lives are often those which cost us least. I wasted the best years of my youth in the worship of a wicked woman, who jilted and cheated me at last. I gave this meek angel but a few courteous words—a little fraternal tenderness—and lo, she loved me. The life which had been so dark and desolate grew bright beneath her influence; and I went back to Puy Verdun with a fair young bride for my companion.

Ah, how sweet a change there was in my life and in my home! The village children no longer shrank appalled as the dark horseman rode by, the village crones no longer crossed themselves; for a woman rode by his side—a woman whose charities had won the love of all those ignorant creatures, and whose companionship had transformed the gloomy lord of the château into a loving husband and a gentle master. The old retainers forgot the untimely fate of my cousin, and served me with cordial willingness, for love of their young mistress.

There are no words which can tell the pure and perfect happiness of that time. I felt like a traveller who had traversed the frozen seas of an arctic region, remote from human love or human companionship, to find himself on a sudden in the bosom of a verdant valley, in the sweet atmosphere of home. The change seemed too bright to be real; and I strove in vain to put away from my mind the vague suspicion that my new life was but some fantastic dream.

So brief were those halcyon hours, that, looking back on them now, it is scarcely strange if I am still half inclined to fancy the first days of my married life could have been no more than a dream.

Neither in my days of gloom nor in my days of happiness had I been troubled by the recollection of André's blasphemous oath. The words which with his last breath he had whispered in my ear were vain and meaningless to me. He had vented his rage in those idle threats, as he might have vented it in idle execrations. That he will haunt the footsteps of his enemy after death is the one revenge which a dying man can promise himself; and if men had power thus to avenge themselves, the earth would be peopled with phantoms.

I had lived for three years at Puy Verdun; sitting alone in the solemn midnight by the hearth where he had sat, pacing the corridors that had echoed his footfall; and in all that time my fancy had never so played me false as to shape the shadow of the dead.

Is it strange, then, if I had forgotten André's horrible promise?

There was no portrait of my cousin at Puy Verdun. It was the age of boudoir art, and a miniature set in the lid of a gold bonbonnière, or hidden artfully in a massive bracelet, was more fashionable than a clumsy life-size image, fit only to hang on the gloomy walls of a provincial château rarely visited by its owner. My cousin's fair face had adorned more than one bonbonnière, and had been concealed in more than one bracelet; but it was not among the faces that looked down from the paneled walls of Puy Verdun.

In the library I found a picture which awoke painful associations. It was the portrait of a De Brissac, who had flourished in the time of Francis the First; and it was from this picture that my cousin André had copied the quaint hunting-dress he wore at the Regent's ball. The library was a room in which I spent a good deal of my life; and I ordered a curtain to be hung before this picture.

We had been married three months, when Eveline one day asked, "Who is the lord of the château nearest to this?"

I looked at her with astonishment.

"My dearest," I answered, "do you not know that there is no other château within forty miles of Puy Verdun?"

"Indeed!" she said; "that is strange."

I asked her why the fact seemed strange to her; and after much entreaty I obtained from her the reason of her surprise.

In her walks about the park and woods during the last month, she had met a man who, by his dress and bearing, was obviously of noble rank. She had imagined that he occupied some château near at hand, and that his estate adjoined ours. I was at a loss to imagine who this stranger could be; for my estate of Puy Verdun lay in the heart of a desolate region, and unless when some traveller's coach went lumbering and jingling through the village, one had little more chance of encountering a gentleman than of meeting a demigod.

"Have you seen this man often, Eveline?" I asked.

She answered, in a tone which had a touch of sadness, "I see him every day."

"Where, dearest?"

"Sometimes in the park, sometimes in the wood. You know the little cascade, Hector, where there is some old neglected rock-work that forms a kind of cavern. I have taken a fancy to that spot, and have spent many mornings there reading. Of late I have seen the stranger there every morning."

"He has never dared to address you?"

"Never. I have looked up from my book, and have seen him standing at a little distance, watching me silently. I have continued reading; and when I have raised my eyes again I have found him gone. He must approach and depart with a stealthy tread, for I never hear his footfall. Sometimes I have almost wished that he would speak to me. It is so terrible to see him standing silently there."

"He is some insolent peasant who seeks to frighten you."

My wife shook her head.

"He is no peasant," she answered. "It is not by his dress alone I judge, for that is strange to me. He has an air of nobility which it is impossible to mistake."

"Is he young or old?"

"He is young and handsome."

I was much disturbed by the idea of this stranger's intrusion on my wife's solitude; and I went straight to the village to inquire if any stranger had been seen there. I could hear of no one. I questioned the servants closely, but without result. Then I determined to accompany my wife in her walks, and to judge for myself of the rank of the stranger.

For a week I devoted all my mornings to rustic rambles with Eveline in the park and woods; and in all that week we saw no one but an occasional peasant in *sabots*, or one of our own household returning from a neighbouring farm.

I was a man of studious habits, and those summer rambles disturbed the even current of my life. My wife perceived this, and entreated me to trouble myself no further.

"I will spend my mornings in the pleasaunce, Hector," she said; "the stranger cannot intrude upon me there."

"I begin to think the stranger is only a phantasm of your own romantic brain," I replied, smiling at the earnest face lifted to mine. "A *châtelaine* who is always reading romances may well meet handsome cavaliers in the woodlands. I daresay I have *Mdlle. Scuderi* to thank for this noble stranger, and that he is only the great Cyrus in modern costume."

"Ah, that is the point which mystifies me, Hector," she said. "The stranger's costume is not modern. He looks as an old picture might look if it could descend from its frame."

Her words pained me, for they reminded me of that hidden picture in the library, and the quaint hunting costume of orange and purple which André de Brissac wore at the Regent's ball.

After this my wife confined her walks to the pleasure; and for many weeks I heard no more of the nameless stranger. I dismissed all thought of him from my mind, for a graver and heavier care had come upon me. My wife's health began to droop. The change in her was so gradual as to be almost imperceptible to those who watched her day by day. It was only when she put on a rich gala dress which she had not worn for months that I saw how wasted the form must be on which the embroidered bodice hung so loosely, and how wan and dim were the eyes which had once been brilliant as the jewels she wore in her hair.

I sent a messenger to Paris to summon one of the court physicians; but I knew that many days must needs elapse before he could arrive at Puy Verdun.

In the interval I watched my wife with unutterable fear.

It was not her health only that had declined. The change was more painful to behold than any physical alteration. The bright and sunny spirit had vanished, and in the place of my joyous young bride I beheld a woman weighed down by rooted melancholy. In vain I sought to fathom the cause of my darling's sadness. She assured me that she had no reason for sorrow or discontent, and that if she seemed sad without a motive, I must forgive her sadness, and consider it as a misfortune rather than a fault.

I told her that the court physician would speedily find some cure for her despondency, which must needs arise from physical causes, since she had no real ground for sorrow. But although she said nothing, I could see she had no hope or belief in the healing powers of medicine.

One day, when I wished to beguile her from that pensive silence in which she was wont to sit an hour at a time, I told her, laughing, that she appeared to have forgotten her mysterious cavalier of the wood, and it seemed also as if he had forgotten her.

To my wonderment, her pale face became of a sudden crimson; and from crimson changed to pale again in a breath.

"You have never seen him since you deserted your woodland grotto?" I said.

She turned to me with a heart-rending look.

"Hector," she cried, "I see him every day; and it is that which is killing me."

She burst into a passion of tears when she had said this. I took her in my arms as if she had been a frightened child, and tried to comfort her.

"My darling, this is madness," I said. "You know that no stran-

ger can come to you in the pleasaunce. The moat is ten feet wide and always full of water, and the gates are kept locked day and night by old Massou. The châtelaine of a mediæval fortress need fear no intruder in her antique garden."

My wife shook her head sadly.

"I see him every day," she said.

On this I believed that my wife was mad. I shrank from questioning her more closely concerning her mysterious visitant. It would be ill, I thought, to give a form and substance to the shadow that tormented her by too close inquiry about its look and manner, its coming and going.

I took care to assure myself that no stranger to the household could by any possibility penetrate to the pleasaunce. Having done this, I was fain to await the coming of the physician.

He came at last. I revealed to him the conviction which was my misery. I told him that I believed my wife to be mad. He saw her—spent an hour alone with her, and then came to me. To my unspeakable relief he assured me of her sanity.

"It is just possible that she may be affected by one delusion," he said; "but she is so reasonable upon all other points, that I can scarcely bring myself to believe her the subject of a monomania. I am rather inclined to think that she really sees the person of whom she speaks. She described him to me with a perfect minuteness. The descriptions of scenes or individuals given by patients afflicted with monomania are always more or less disjointed; but your wife spoke to me as clearly and calmly as I am now speaking to you. Are you sure there is no one who can approach her in that garden where she walks?"

"I am quite sure."

"Is there any kinsman of your steward, or hanger-on of your household,—a young man with a fair womanish face, very pale, and rendered remarkable by a crimson scar, which looks like the mark of a blow?"

"My God!" I cried, as the light broke in upon me all at once. "And the dress—the strange old-fashioned dress?"

"The man wears a hunting costume of purple and orange," answered the doctor.

I knew then that André de Brissac had kept his word, and that in the hour when my life was brightest his shadow had come between me and happiness.

I showed my wife the picture in the library, for I would fain assure myself that there was some error in my fancy about my cousin. She shook like a leaf when she beheld it, and clung to me convulsively.

"This is witchcraft, Hector," she said. "The dress in that picture is the dress of the man I see in the pleasaunce; but the face is not his."

Then she described to me the face of the stranger; and it was my cousin's face line for line—André de Brissac, whom she had never seen

in the flesh. Most vividly of all did she describe the cruel mark upon his face, the trace of a fierce blow from an open hand.

After this I carried my wife away from Puy Verdun. We wandered far—through the southern provinces, and into the very heart of Switzerland. I thought to distance the ghastly phantom, and I fondly hoped that change of scene would bring peace to my wife.

It was not so. Go where we would, the ghost of André de Brissac followed us. To my eyes that fatal shadow never revealed itself. *That* would have been too poor a vengeance. It was my wife's innocent heart which André made the instrument of his revenge. The unholy presence destroyed her life. My constant companionship could not shield her from the horrible intruder. In vain did I watch her; in vain did I strive to comfort her.

"He will not let me be at peace," she said; "he comes between us, Hector. He is standing between us now. I can see his face with the red mark upon it plainer than I see yours."

One fair moonlight night, when we were together in a mountain village in the Tyrol, my wife cast herself at my feet, and told me she was the worst and vilest of women.

"I have confessed all to my director," she said; "from the first I have not hidden my sin from Heaven. But I feel that death is near me; and before I die I would fain reveal my sin to you."

"What sin, my sweet one?"

"When first the stranger came to me in the forest, his presence bewildered and distressed me, and I shrank from him as from something strange and terrible. He came again and again; by and by I found myself thinking of him, and watching for his coming. His image haunted me perpetually; I strove in vain to shut his face out of my mind. Then followed an interval in which I did not see him; and, to my shame and anguish, I found that life seemed dreary and desolate without him. After that came the time in which he haunted the pleasure; and—O, Hector, kill me if you will, for I deserve no mercy at your hands!—I grew in those days to count the hours that must elapse before his coming, to take no pleasure save in the sight of that pale face with the red brand upon it. He plucked all old familiar joys out of my heart, and left in it but one weird unholy pleasure—the delight of his presence. For a year I have lived but to see him. And now curse me, Hector; for this is my sin. Whether it comes of the baseness of my own heart, or is the work of witchcraft, I know not; but I know that I have striven against this wickedness in vain."

I took my wife to my breast, and forgave her. In sooth, what had I to forgive? Was the fatality that overshadowed us any work of hers? On the next night she died, with her hand in mine; and at the very last she told me, sobbing and affrighted, that *he* was by her side.



DYKWYNKYN AT WORK

WHO and what is Dykwynkyn? Is it a town in Wales, or the name of a Scandinavian warrior, or of an oasis in Central America, or of a substitute for coffee, or of a recently-invented perfume, or of a Saxon god, or of a newly-discovered sort of fur, or the title of a sensation drama?

Dykwynkyn is none of these; Dykwynkyn is the theatrical playbill name of the artist who invents and produces the masks—the famous masks seen in the famous pantomimes produced at Christmas at Drury Lane Theatre.

And *apropos* of the production of pantomimes, or, indeed, any other sort of theatrical entertainments, we wonder if any of our readers, "sitting at a play," ever thought of the amount of genius, skill, labour, patience, and hard work expended in preparing the dramatic dish set before him. If he or she be not theatrical *habitués*, let us, like Asmodeus in the famous story, lift off the roof-tops.

The first roof, then, that melts from sight is that of a pleasant house in Kensington, Brompton, or St. John's Wood. A pale gentleman, with unbrushed hair, is writing rapidly by the light of a large spectral lamp. Now he dips his pen into a silver inkstand, and now he dips his lips into a tumbler of brandy and seltzer-water; now he rises and paces the room, and passes his outstretched fingers through his hair; then lights an odorous havannah, and sits and writes again. This is a dramatic author writing a play, farce, drama, or whatever it may be.

"But" (for the sake of convenience, we here imagine a reader raising an objection) "silver inkstands, pleasant houses, brandy-and-seltzer, and havannahs! I thought dramatic authors dwelt in garrets, and lived upon cow-heel and tripe—when they could get it upon credit—and let noblemen and gentlemen kick them and give them guineas; that they pawned their blankets in the winter; and were grateful for a pint of beer."

So they were, dear reader, in the good old days—those particularly prime old days read of in the works of Fielding, Smollett, and Mr. Alexander Pope. "*Mais nous avons changé tout cela*" in these degenerate modern times.

Another roof vanishes—the reader will understand that these houses and their inhabitants are fancy sketches, and not photographs; the roof of a very fine house—indeed a house a little too ornate inside and out. The owner sits in a gorgeous study littered with papers. He wears a tremendous *robe-de-chambre* and a fiery Fez; and from the

formation of his nose and lips we should judge that he is not entirely unconnected by descent with the most ancient people of the world. He is a manager choosing what piece he shall produce. Shall it be "The harp that once through Tara's halls," or "Patsey the boy of '98,"—the public has taken kindly to Irish subjects lately,—or "the death of the Doge, and the Bride of the Adriatic," a Venetian subject? Is he balancing the different degrees of literary merit of the several plays? Not he! He is thinking that in Venice they wore velvets, and that the people in the pit like velvets. He sympathises with a taste for gorgeous raiment, and loves gold chains of arabesque pattern. Now in Ireland there is an over-predominance of frieze; it is all gray and green, without one slash of gold or scarlet. The actors should be draped from head to foot, and the *corps de ballet* should be undraped as much—well—as much as public taste will permit.

Another roof blends with the clouds, and discloses a home where Taste reigns a presiding goddess. A pale gentleman in a velvet jacket is looking out of window and biting his lips. He is a celebrated scenic artist. He has decided for "The harp that once, &c.," for he can introduce a grand allegorical scene—"The Meeting of the Waters"—with gauze fountains, muslin waves, silver foam, and dishevelled nymphs playing golden harps as they disport themselves in transparent and translucent streams. "That is the sort of thing, my boy," exclaims the delighted manager; "green drapery, and devilish little of it. High art—lots of limbs and loads of Dutch metal."

The ballet-master is inventing a *divertissement* which must embrace harps, Ireland, bathing, swimming, and graceful poses. One idea strikes him. Could not the nymphs splash each other with diamond-drops, and Leprechauns run down from the hills "like twenty thousand rills," invite the nymphs to dry land, and there dance with them? the Leprechauns in red, the nymphs in green; four harpists, who could almost make their instruments pronounce the word "Mavourneen," to send their echoes through the mountains. The effect would be, as a burlesque writer might say, "el-echo-trical!"

The ballet-master glides to the house of his friend, the leader of the orchestra. That professor sits down to compose the music. He does not compose with a piano, but with pen and ink. When he invents a tune, he does not take his violin out of its case, but a pencil from his pocket. When he requires a popular air, he does not evolve it out of his own inner consciousness, but listens to the voices of his children singing in the garden.

The theatrical hair-dresser—I beg his pardon, *perruquier*—ponders over the manufacture of a *bald wig*—a singular contradiction in terms, if we imagine a man simulating baldness by means of a wig! The theatrical hosier is making stockings; the theatrical bootmaker striving to outdo all his former efforts—and prices—in the shoeing of the *Leprechauns*; the theatrical hat-maker is busy inventing a something

that is to look at one and the same time like a fairy coronet and the Lord Mayor's coachman's three-cornered cocked-hat ; the modellers are moulding the ornamental portion of the harps ; the scene-painters are shutting their eyes and imagining cool greens ; the *corps-de-ballet* is "practising" the super-master in drilling his frowsy squad ; and the stage-manager is laying out the *mise en scène*.

As by the kindness of the treasurer of Drury Lane Theatre we were permitted to see some of the old accounts, we are enabled to give some interesting details as to the salaries of that extraordinary period known in and out of theatres as the "palmy days of the British drama." We are aware that this is a digression ; but we shall not transgress for more than a page or so.

The payment of all these heroines and heroes—these Pagan gods and goddesses, kings, queens, commanders, lovers, villains, valets, misers, nabobs, cobblers, ladies, and waiting-women—these exploiters of human passions and authors' manuscript—these dealers in mystery and emotions—was of course weekly ; any other mode of remuneration would be impossible. Conceive a dramatic artist charging for *items*, as in an ordinary bill, after this fashion :

COMEDY.—Thursday, Jan. 26.

To making love to the Lady Ildefonza	£0 10 0
To scaling garden-wall of ditto	0 15 0
To quarrel with brother of ditto	0 12 0
To combat with the same	0 15 0
To reconciliation	0 5 0
To three hearty comedy laughs	0 3 0
Total	£3 0 0

The difference between the amounts paid half a century ago in comparison with the sums now paid is extraordinary. On reference to the salary-list of old Drury Lane Theatre in 1803, we found some remarkable items. The name of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the placeman, statesman, orator, manager, and author, is down for 31*l.* 10*s.* This, it is to be presumed, was his salary as manager—the sum he allowed himself *on the books*. Tom Sheridan follows for 6*l.* 15*s.* Jack Bannister junior had 9*l.* as stage-manager, and 17*l.* as actor—a remarkable salary in those days, when such public favourites as Pope, Wroughton, and even Jack Johnstone, the famous actor of Irish parts, received only 15*l.* The celebrated Downton and Dickey Suett, of facetious memory, got 12*l.*; and Henry Johnstone (Rugantino Johnstone as he was called) was a ten-pounder ; as also was the stately Barrymore, the original Pizarro. Mr. Byrn, the celebrated ballet-master, received 10*l.*; and lower down the list there is an item, Byrn junior, 1*l.*; this is the present Mr. Oscar Byrn, who must have been extremely juvenile in the year 1803. Palmer is marked at 9*l.*; Wewitzer at 7*l.*; and Holland at 6*l.* Grimaldi—the famous Joe—got 4*l.* Hear

modelled in clay in exactly the same way that a sculptor models a bust. The clay face is then oiled, and a plaster-cast is taken from it. Brown paper, soaked in water, is then placed bit by bit and layer upon layer in the cast, and pasted and sponged together. This is allowed to dry; and when it is taken out, it is a hard concrete mass, as unbreakable as the shell of a cocoa-nut. It is then painted, wigged, whiskered, eye-browed; the eyes are placed in it, and on Boxing-night the artist is placed inside it; and the little ladies and gentlemen with the silver hair and the cheeks "half flesh half fruit" in the boxes, and the young persons in shirt-sleeves and perspiration in the gallery, roar with laughter or thrill with terror, according to Dykwynkyn's intention.

Before concluding, let us express our thanks to the present lessee of Drury Lane, Mr. Chatterton, for his courtesy in permitting the unveiling of wonders concealed from the general eye; and let us hope that he will succeed in making his theatre a home for the poetical drama. We have also to thank Mr. Richard Wynn Keene, and wish him well through his arduous labours in fairy-land, gnome-land, coral grot, and magic mountain-top.

T. W. ROBERTSON.

THE IRON CASKET

A Tale of the *Crabaux Forests*

IN THREE PARTS

PART THE THIRD

‘I WALKED slowly home, oppressed with thought and sorrow. Though the tide of peril had risen around Aline, and the sound of the waves was thundering in my ears, I could not keep my mind to her share in the complication of dangers with which I felt we were beset. The misery, the remorse, the terror, which Clémence was suffering filled me with such compassion as left no room in my heart for anger towards the woman so basely deceived and so cruelly awakened.

‘Thoroughly worn out by fatigue and excitement, and oppressed by a sense of much thought which must yet be gone through, and which I had not then the power to arrange, I threw myself upon my bed and fell into a profound sleep. When my *garçon de magasin* came to rouse me as usual, I told him he must for this once do as well as he could without me. I was forced to yield to the inexorable necessity of sleep; that dread want which will not be denied, and which follows exhaustion of mind far more surely than it follows physical fatigue. The day was far advanced when I awoke, and though I had then shaken off the positive weariness which had oppressed me, I was glad that the necessity for attending to the claims of my business made it imperative to postpone thought for some time. I sent to inquire for Comel late in the day, and learned that he was well.

‘The evening was drawing on, and I had been occupied since I had risen exclusively with business, so that I had had no time to dwell on the subjects which had so pressing an interest for me, when a servant in a handsome sombre livery entered the shop and addressed my assistant, who, after a few minutes, referred the matter of their colloquy to me. It was this: the servant said his mistress was about to leave Paris on a long journey, and not wishing to be encumbered with a number of keys, she desired to have the locks of her travelling cases altered, and all made to correspond, and he had been directed to inquire whether I could attend her on the following day to receive her orders for the necessary alterations. I was deeply engaged with my books when the question was put to me, and I answered hastily:

“Yes; enter the address and hour in the order-book;” and again turned to my accounts. I did not observe any thing further, and the servant left the shop.

‘When business was over and night had closed in, I sat down alone to think over the conversation I had had with Clémence, and to consider whether I ought to write to Aline, tell her all that had occurred, and urge her to prolong her stay in England as much as possible, until the eminently probable event of old Comel’s death should enable us to get rid of Deligny. I at length decided upon doing so; and then it occurred to me that I had lost a good opportunity of forwarding a private letter to my sister with perfect safety by the hands of Madame Delasborde, who would doubtless have willingly taken charge of one, which I could have had addressed by Clémence. I came to the conclusion, however, on reflection, that the risk of writing by the ordinary method was less than the risk which might be incurred by her remaining in ignorance of the state of things; and I was also anxious to let her know she had been mistaken in supposing that the box which she had confided to my care contained any thing of value, and to learn from her what it was which she had supposed it to contain. Thinking of this, I mechanically put my hand in my pocket, seeking the key of the important box. It was not there. This surprised and perplexed me. I endeavoured to recal the smallest circumstances which had occurred on the occasion of my opening the safe and transmitting Aline’s jewels to Madame Delasborde. In reality it was only on the previous evening these circumstances had taken place; but I had undergone so much excitement since, that the time seemed trebled, and I could hardly believe that such a recapitulation required me to look back to only yesterday. When I had succeeded in recalling all the particulars of what had occurred, I arrived at the conclusion that, finding only a bracelet of berries in the box, and judging that Aline had been mistaken in supposing she had placed something of especial value in it, I had not thought any more about it, but had merely replaced the box in the safe without withdrawing the key. “It will be troublesome, however, if I have lost it,” I thought; “I shall have to make another. By the way, I wonder where I left the wax mould.” I took up a candle and went into my closed-up shop to look for this article. I went behind the counter and drew out a drawer in which I usually kept such things. There lay the mould. I put it in my pocket with a vague kind of purpose of “seeing about it” in the morning, and as I did so, my eye fell upon the order-book, which lay upon the counter. “I may as well see what time is at my disposal, and whether it comes early or late,” I thought, remembering the errand of the servant. I opened the book and found this entry:

“To wait on Madame Delasborde, Rue de Madame 60, at two o’clock P.M.”

‘Madame Delasborde! This lady was Aline’s friend, the elegant lady to whom I had transmitted Aline’s jewels early the previous evening. Her departure then must have been delayed; for I had understood from Comel that she had intended to leave Paris at daybreak on the

morning of the day that had just closed. The delay was rather a fortunate circumstance for me; I would now write my letter, get Clémence to address it, before I went to Madame Delasborde's hotel on the following day, and by requesting Clémence also to send the letter to that lady, avoid identification of myself in any way with the Countess de Corandeuil.

'I returned to my sitting-room, and sat down to write to Aline. I was little in the habit of writing, and a poor narrator at any time, and the task proved lengthy and wearisome. The night wore on, as I wrote, and the clocks were striking one when I had reached that point in my narrative which related to the abstraction of Aline's letter by Deligny, and his mysterious seclusion in her rooms while it was in his possession. While I was writing the words, "Neither the unhappy Clémence nor myself can penetrate the motive of this extraordinary proceeding. Supposing his object was to copy your letter, in which we cannot discern any possible purpose, he could have done it in a few minutes"—a sudden thought struck me, which sent the blood throbbing through my veins with fearful force and speed. It came like a flash of lightning, revealing hidden things indeed, but only for a moment, leaving deeper darkness behind, and striking me almost blind in its passage. No, he could not have required to copy the letter, but he might have wanted to forge the handwriting!

'The jewels—the order in Aline's hand—the lady who came for them—the time named for her departure—finally, Deligny's sudden parting with Clémence! I started from my seat, and advanced to the door. What was I going to do? I stood irresolute, trying, for some time vainly, to arrange my thoughts, to put my suspicions in order, to challenge their cause and origin, to follow their course, and finally, to determine upon my own. I need not describe to you, father, the terrible struggle in my mind. Over all the arguments of my suspicions, of the sudden inspiration of fear, one consideration rose dominant. Would Deligny have been satisfied with so small a booty? Would he have relinquished the prospect, which his power over Clémence assured to him, of getting Comel's wealth ultimately into his possession, for the sake of a comparatively paltry present gain? The jewels were worth a few thousand francs at most, for the former countess had been able to save but little from the wreck of her wealth and state, in the tempest of the Revolution. Supposing my wildest suspicions to be true, the enormous audacity of the enterprise did not astonish me. Its success would entirely depend on Jean Comel's knowledge or ignorance of the identity of Madame Delasborde; a circumstance easily ascertainable by Deligny in the interval between his seeing the letter, and the transmission of the jewels to the person in whose hands I had placed them.

'Supposing it to be all true—true to an extent of which I saw only a sort of confused and frightened vision—supposing Deligny had forged the order for the jewels, had employed his mistress to personate Madame Delasborde, and had made his escape from Paris with her

on that same evening (and it must have been about the time the lady had been in her carriage at the porte-cochère that Deligny had met Clémence at the little gate, dressed in travelling costume);—if all this were indeed true, and not the dream of my imagination, Aline had escaped on easy terms from the power of Deligny. His power over her, as far as *he* knew it, had not been really serious; it was only as *I* knew it, that it was formidable. I reminded myself of this; I argued with my own perplexity, that as *he* had the means of calculating matters, he could not hope to make much of Aline's secret; and his power over Clémence could be exercised only by forcing her to make him master of Comel's wealth after his death by becoming his wife. The combinations were easy to make; and when I recalled what Clémence had said about a woman, for whom Deligny had betrayed her—a woman who was his mistress, and who doubtless would prefer a lesser and immediate gain to a larger and distant one, purchased at the price of her lover's marriage, and added Deligny's distaste to Clémence, and the weariness of her which he could not disguise, even when, as she had said, such demonstration was hardly prudent,—the result came out pretty clearly. As the first agitation of the shock of suspicion subsided, the whole thing arranged itself. Suspense was unbearable; I could not endure it until the morning; and I resolved to proceed at once, even at that unseemly hour, to Madame Delasborde's hotel, and ascertain from the concierge, whom a generous fee would recompense for the disturbance, whether his lady had been absent at eight o'clock on the evening of the previous day. I hurriedly folded the sheets of paper on which my letter to Aline was written, thrust them into a breast-pocket, and went out into the summer night, from the home in which I had been reasonably prosperous. I have never seen it since, father; and I often wonder who lives there now!

"I need not have feared disturbing the concierge at No. 60 Rue de Madame. Some of the inmates of the hotel were holding a late reception that night; and several carriages were drawn up before the porte-cochère, the doors were open, and the vault-like passage into the *cour* was lighted by a swinging oil-lamp. The door of the lodge was open, and the portly figure and good-humoured face of the concierge were visible, as he talked with a select group of servants, who waited the descent of their masters and mistresses from the brilliant rooms above. They looked at me curiously, but not rudely, as I drew near. I daresay I looked haggard and wild enough.

"Madame Delasborde lives here, does she not?" I asked, after having saluted the concierge and his companions.

"Yes," he replied, with some curiosity in his tone.

"Can you tell me whether she was at home on Tuesday evening at eight o'clock?"

"I can tell you; but I should like to know what is your reason for coming at such an hour to ask such a question."

"I have a very important reason," I began; but at that moment a man stepped out from behind the group, and I recognised the servant who had come to my shop.

"Why, you are Leroux, the locksmith of the Rue T——," he said, in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes," I replied, "I am. I have no impertinent motive in asking the question I have just put to the concierge, and I will explain my reasons for doing so to your lady to-morrow, but I must know to-night. She went, did she not, to the Hôtel de Corandeuil on Tuesday evening—by the bye, you would of course have been with her, my friend—and there received a parcel to take to Madame de Corandeuil in London?"

"The man looked at me in amazement, and replied,

"Certainly not; Madame only came to Paris from St. Cloud an hour before she sent me to order a locksmith to attend her to-day. You were the nearest, and so I selected you."

"And when is Madame going to England?" I asked.

"How do you know she is going to England?" said the man quickly; "I only told you she was going to travel; I said nothing about England."

"Never mind, my friend," I answered; "I meant no offence; if you prefer not to answer my question, let it alone; I will explain to-morrow."

"Madame will start on Saturday," said the man. I thanked him, saluted the company, and turned away; leaving them, no doubt, to much speculation and wonderment.

"My suspicion then was correct. All was as I had thought, had hoped. Aline and Clémence were both free from the power of this man. When Aline should understand the value of such freedom, she would not regret its price, and Clémence already estimated it highly, though erroneously. It would be necessary to communicate the occurrence to the Count, and he would, of course, take steps to have Deligny pursued; but there was little reason to apprehend success in such an attempt. There was no clue to the direction in which the accomplices had gone, and thirty hours had already elapsed since the robbery, unsuspected by any living being but myself, had been perpetrated. I had it in my power to delay its discovery for several hours longer, until indeed I should be obliged to wait on Madame Delasborde. And now I regretted that I had yielded to the impulse which had induced me to make inquiry at her hotel. Had I seen only the concierge, the matter would have been of little consequence; but the footman had seen me, had recognised me as the locksmith of the Rue T——; and when I should have to explain on the morrow to Madame Delasborde the motive of my questions, how should I contrive to avoid supplying her feminine curiosity and quickness with a hint of some tie between Aline and myself? This, however, was but a trivial matter in comparison with the great discovery I had made, and it might well be laid aside for

the present. I now began to feel extreme impatience to see Clémence. I would see her at the earliest hour possible in the morning, and prepare her for the formal intimation of the robbery which must reach Comel. The hours seemed endless till the time at which I could see her should arrive. I had not either power or inclination to rest in the interval; the long sleep of the previous day had refreshed me; and now this novel and strong excitement held my nerves and senses in the fullest wakefulness. I wandered restlessly about, longing for the minutes to slip more rapidly away, and no doubt occasionally attracting the attention of even the somnolent watchmen. At last I turned my steps mechanically towards the Hôtel de Corandeuil, and found myself, without thinking whither I was going, in the small street at the back of the building.

‘I approached the gate at which I had parted with Clémence on the previous night, thinking of the interview which had taken place there between her and Deligny, and wondering if it would grieve her, despite her jealous anger, when she should learn, by the news that I had to tell her, that that interview was their last. I laid my hand idly upon the gate, as I glanced at the dark pile of building, and the cloudy sky above, through which the moon was sailing; and, to my surprise, it yielded to my light and idle touch. I started violently as it fell back, noiselessly, upon its hinges. How came the gate to be open? How could Clémence have been so careless? The apartments of Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, to say nothing of the remainder of the hotel, were exposed to any danger that might arise from such an oversight. I determined to enter the hotel, arouse Clémence, and have the gate secured. I accordingly passed the windows of the blind lady’s room, found the glass door which led into the passage close by also open, and perceived a gleam of light from the apartments occupied by Comel and Clémence. A step further and I heard the rustle of papers, and a sound, awfully like a deep heavy groan. Horror arrested my progress for a moment, during which I had time to remember that I was totally unarmed. The only article in my possession capable of being used as a weapon was the heavy, clumsy key of my shop-door, which I had taken with me, as usual, when I went out at night. I therefore advanced with caution towards the door of Comel’s room, which opened outwards upon the corridor, and having reached it, I beheld—this:

‘The doors of the alcove in which the old man slept were open, and in the bed lay Jean Comel. One glance at the frightfully convulsed face, horrible in its stony fixedness, told me that paralysis had seized upon him, probably in the first shock of the terror which had blasted his sight, and was now blasting mine. On the floor, just outside the doors of the alcove, and with her extended right arm stretched towards it, lay Clémence. A hideous wound was in her temple, from which the blood was slowly oozing, and trickling down upon the floor; her left hand was convulsively clenched round the leg of a heavy chair.

The room was in the utmost confusion ; a lamp was burning brightly ; the iron safe was open, as were the drawers of the rosewood bureau ; and upon a table in the centre of the floor were heaps of gold and notes, and a bundle of fragments of some stuff, which had been cut or torn to pieces. Aline's iron casket stood open, close to the lamp, and by the table stood Achille Deligny, eagerly reading a closely-written paper. I gazed upon this scene with unutterable horror, spell-bound for a moment. The next, I had rushed upon the ruffian, and seized him by the neck. I know nothing of the fierce and violent struggle that ensued ; but it was very brief. I had no chance against the strength and desperation of my opponent, and I found myself dashed to the ground beside the prostrate body of Clémence, with Deligny's fingers round my throat, and his fierce wicked face bending over me in devilish triumph.

"Utter one word, and I will cut your throat," he said, in a hissing whisper, "you white-livered cur, you skulking fool ! I hardly know why I don't kill you now, for I hate you ; but I will leave the law to kill you." As he spoke, he pressed his powerful fingers closer and closer into my throat ; and the agony became so acute that I could hardly retain my senses sufficiently to understand him as he spoke.

"So," he said, "the jewel-box which madame the virtuous Countess recommended to her devoted brother's care did not contain diamonds alone, less pure than the lady's honour, less stainless than the name of Corandeuil. No, there was a letter in the box, and the devoted brother left it there, and if he gets the chance of denouncing Achille Deligny as a thief, he will hear the interesting village episode of the loves of Charles Comel and Mademoiselle Aline, at present Countess of Corandeuil, related for the warning and edification of the world. So, this is the secret I vainly tried to discover from Charles Comel's ravings—this is the love, this is the hate he cherished to the last, with a jealous secrecy that defied delirium. You idiot ! you are an honest man, forsooth, and did not think of looking at the lining of the box—and there the secret lay : women are all fools, the wickedest and the worst among them are hardly wiser than the doves and the lambs. It was not wise to preserve Comel's letter—was it ? But it was fortunate for me. The girl was no fool who did this thing, and hid it, and married a noble, and carried her countesship with the bluest blood in France ; but she had her folly, and her devoted brother never dreamed that folly might lurk in the box he threw carelessly aside. Ay, you may wince and shudder, Antoine Leroux ; but you cannot escape me. I was prepared to defy you before I knew this ; I am ready and able to defy you now. I will take the old man's money, the particulars of which he so obligingly confided to me—(it was troublesome to get the notes out of the robe-de-chambre ; I fear the garment is useless)—and I will pass unharmed out of this room. The letter from your sister's lover is now safe in my breast—fool, why did

you not spring at *that*, and not at me?—and is my security. You dare not molest me, because I have her secret; and, at the worst, I will swear you are my accomplice. I don't think Comel is likely to be in a condition to clear you, nor Clémence either, if she would; but the poor fool loves me, and will not hate me, though I have hit her rather hard." His grasp relaxed a little, as he turned his head aside and looked with brutal scorn at the insensible and bleeding form. I made a violent effort, and succeeded in wrenching his hands from my throat, though he strove to strangle me, and gnashed his teeth, and swore horribly in an undertone. Another desperate effort shook him off; so that I rose, scrambling to my feet sick and giddy; but, just as I had recovered sufficient breath to strive to cry for help, I staggered, struck my head violently against a corner of the open door of the iron safe, and fell heavily to the ground.

'When I came to my senses, I found the chamber flooded with the light of the newly-risen sun, and crowded with people. I was lying on the floor, my head supported on pillows and tightly bandaged. At each side of me stood a gendarme. Auguste, the valet-de-chambre, was gazing at me, with a kind of horrified compassion in his face, and a group of four persons was gathered round the table. Another group stood between me and the alcove, and intercepted my view of the bed. One of the gentlemen at the table was seated, and was writing busily, talking all the time to those around him, and glancing round with an eager, intelligent eye, which seemed to take in the minutest particulars of the surrounding scene. I gazed wearily around, and one of the gendarmes called to the gentleman who was writing at the table, that I seemed sensible now. Two gentlemen thereupon approached me, of whom one, not unkindly, felt my temples and my wrist, asked me if I was in much pain, and when I vainly attempted to speak, called for wine and water, with which he moistened my lips as gently as if he had been a woman. I knew afterwards that he was a doctor. He again spoke to me, and I tried to reply; but I could not. This grave gentleman then said aloud and in a tone of authority, "He may be removed with perfect safety." I felt busy hands about me, and a strange sense of entire helplessness, as men tried to raise me, and I could give them no aid. I heard and saw; but it was as one hears and sees in a dream. Some one said, "No papers at all, you say, none of any kind, on the prisoner's person?" and the answer given was, "None, sir." I had a vague and quite painless idea that the prisoner was myself; and that they were saying no papers had been found on me. I remembered, in a far-off kind of way, as though it were something I had heard long before, that I had had papers when I entered that room, my own letter to Aline, and the list of Comel's moneys; and then I must have once more become insensible, or have fallen asleep; for I heard and felt *nothing* more, though they must have lifted me, and conveyed me some distance in a vehicle; for when I next opened my eyes they

beheld the bare walls of a prison cell, and its barred windows, narrow, and close to the roof.

'Long before I was pronounced fit to be subjected to the interrogatory process to which all accused criminals have to submit, I had regained my senses and my self-command sufficiently to understand my position in all its extent; and the prison officials would have been astonished indeed, had they known in how short a time I had contrived to get a message conveyed to Mademoiselle de Corandeuil. It consisted merely of these words:

"Antoine Leroux entreats Mademoiselle de Corandeuil to avoid any mention of his sister."

'I had no means of bribing any one, and yet I found a secure medium for the transmission of this message. The strictest prison laws and the sternest prison *surveillance*, however they may avail against corruption, cannot wholly suppress Christian charity and kindness, which seeks for no reward beyond its own exercise. This accomplished, I lay still, satisfied with my bodily helplessness, and endeavouring to arrange my thoughts and decide upon my future course. I learned, through the kindness of some and the incaution of others, that no suspicion of the presence of another person besides myself, on that fatal night, had arisen, and that I was supposed to have received the blow which stunned me in struggling with Clémence. The heavy key of my shop was found lying beside me in the pool of blood which had trickled from her head, and was immediately declared to have been the instrument with which she had been wounded. The breast-pocket of my coat was full of gold and notes, but no other article had been found upon my person, except the wax mould of the key standing in the lock of the iron casket and the keys of the glass door adjoining Mademoiselle de Corandeuil's apartments, and the small iron gate in the garden wall. Some notes and gold remained on the table, and some were found in the iron casket. The injuries inflicted on Clémence had not proved fatal to her life, but they were pronounced to be utterly destructive of her intellect. No restoration, save to a condition of quiescent idiocy, was anticipated for the unfortunate woman. Deligny had said well; he had indeed hit her hard, and she was in no condition to clear me. Comel had never rallied or spoken; the agonised fixedness of paralysis had deepened into the tranquil fixedness of death within a few hours after the first shock had taken place.

'I am not, perhaps, a very brave man, father; at least I would have always preferred avoiding a danger to confronting it, when it was possible; but when any thing came to me that *must* be confronted, I could generally meet it, not only with firmness, but without any of that internal alarm and sinking of the heart which sometimes accompanies firmness of demeanour. I was not in the least indifferent to my future fate. I was not, indeed, prepared to relinquish that which

had been in reality the one great and governing affection of my life, its one main and ruling solicitude—my love for my sister and my care for her peace—for the purpose of establishing my own innocence and procuring my own release. I would have borne almost any thing that fate could have inflicted on me, rather than have disclosed the history of Deligny, and incurred the public exposure of Aline's terrible story. But I would have avoided the fate which must be mine, if I remained the sole accused of the crimes of that night at the Hôtel de Corandeuil, if I could have avoided it by any means short of Aline's ruin. I had the two things to contemplate in every conceivable aspect, to turn over in my mind in every direction—first, how I was to be saved without danger to her; secondly, how she was to be prevented from rashly bringing ruin upon herself, in an effort to save me. Information of the robbery had been, of course, forwarded to London; but communication was not then so rapid as I am told it is now, for even here we learn how the world which is free, and is called fortunate, wags. The Count and Countess were travelling, and many days had passed, and my interrogation had drawn near, before any communication was received from Eugène de Corandeuil. Before it came I had contrived to send a message to my sister. My shop had been solemnly seized by the police, and all my effects laid under embargo; but my clothes had been forwarded to the prison, and those I sent away were not so carefully searched but that my trusty friend found a scrap of paper, of whose destination he had been forewarned, and which, when it reached my sister's hands, bore these words: "Wait, and keep absolute silence. All shall be explained. Trust and obey me, as I once trusted and obeyed you."

'I knew I had nothing to fear from Aline's impetuosity; she had it not in her character by nature; and the exigencies of her life had established its opposite—deliberation—as her most striking characteristic. Her condition of mind must have been a strange one; for her ignorance of all the circumstances was complete, and must remain nearly, if not quite so. Would she believe me guilty of the robbery? Assuredly not. I never had a fear of that. And yet how wonderful and mysterious the whole thing must appear to her! Comel dead; Clémence worse than dead; no word of explanation ever more to issue from either of them; her jewels stolen; her letter to Comel gone, and with it all proof that I had been cognisant of her commission to Comel, with her assent and intention. Her open avowal of our relationship would not, it appeared to me, go far towards procuring my acquittal, were it made; for though the improbability of my stealing my sister's jewels might be made apparent, that improbability would be more than counterbalanced by the apparently indisputable fact that I had stolen money which my sister could not claim as her own, and which Corandeuil could no doubt identify as the property of his intendant. The more I thought, the more evident it became to me that Aline's inter-

ference could in no way avail me, and that even a full avowal of the facts of the case as they really existed could not exculpate me. I was entangled in a net indeed; and throughout all my ponderings I never forgot that sentence of Achille Deligny's, hissed into my throbbing ears, as his cruel fingers pressed my throat: "I will swear you are my accomplice!"

'Amid the numerous and absorbing topics upon which my mind laboured, there was one that recurred to me, accompanied by painful impatience of the destiny which condemned me to ignorance never to be lessened. This was Deligny's proceedings during the period which elapsed from the time at which he parted with Clémence on the Tuesday evening, until my discovery of him in Comel's room on the Thursday morning after two P.M. I felt tolerably certain that he had not re-entered the house with the connivance or consent of Clémence, at least up to the hour on Wednesday at which I had sent to inquire for Comel, because I felt certain she would have replied to my message in such a way as to let me know that she desired to see me. I concluded, therefore, that the ruffian must have returned to the Hôtel de Corandeuil previous to the hour at which Mademoiselle de Corandeuil retired, availed himself of the usual mode of entrance, and remained concealed until Clémence and Comel had retired to rest; when, no doubt, he had possessed himself of the keys of the glass door and the iron gate, opened both, so as to secure his retreat, and waited until the reign of night was complete and uninterrupted to commence his felonious task. I shuddered as I thought of the suffering which the repentant, defenceless, and terrified woman must have endured on finding her persecutor again start up before her—on finding the "breathing time" on which she had calculated a fallacious expectation. My imagination recoiled before the picture which it conjured up; a picture of whose details it could never learn the truth or the insufficiency. It was evident that the wretched woman had retired peacefully to rest; for she was dressed in her night-clothes when found, and her bedroom was in perfect order. The most natural supposition was, that the thief had succeeded in opening the receptacles which contained poor Comel's ill-fated wealth unheard by the old man (who was entirely unharmed by any external violence), but that the victim of the robber had been aroused from his sleep at last, only to be struck into helpless paralysis by the spectacle upon which his eyes opened, and that some cry or movement of his had roused and alarmed Clémence, accustomed to watch, even while she slept, the troubled slumber of the invalid.

'That the terrible events of the night followed in quick succession, there could be no doubt. I felt anxious to learn how the alarm had been given, and the presence of the gendarmes secured; and I learned that this had been accomplished by the agency of Mademoiselle de Corandeuil. She declared that a circumstance which had occurred a few days previously, when she had been aware that a person had passed by

her and Clémence, as they were leaving the hotel by the garden gate, had made her uneasy and wakeful; that she had questioned Clémence then, whose answer was unsatisfactory, but who ultimately acknowledged that a person had passed them, and declared this person to have been Antoine Leroux. Mademoiselle de Corandeuil further stated that Antoine Leroux was an intimate friend of Jean Comel's to her knowledge and that of the servants, and supposed to be much in his confidence; that she had not felt satisfied of the truth of Clémence's answer, being unable to reconcile so simple an explanation with her previous hesitation and reluctance to make any; and that she had remained uneasy and agitated, so much so that she became indisposed, and had finally determined, when again able to go out, to request her "director" to write for her to the Count de Corandeuil, stating her conviction that all was not as it should be at the *Hôtel de Corandeuil*, and requesting him to return to Paris, or provide for the more efficient protection of the house, without delay. The statement of Mademoiselle de Corandeuil then proceeded to relate that, on the Wednesday night, having fallen into a heavy sleep after Clémence had left her, she was awakened—of course she could not say at what hour—by a curious sound; that she sat up in her bed and listened; that the sound continuing, and being unmistakably that of a human voice uttering fierce threats and imprecations against some one apparently offering resistance, she had left her bed, and crept out into the passage to listen. That being perfectly familiar with all the *rez-de-chaussée*, she advanced without difficulty to within a short distance of the door of Comel's room, and there distinctly heard a man's voice say in a fierce undertone: "*I will take the old man's money, the particulars of which he so obligingly confided to me.*" Being questioned about the voice, she declared herself unable to identify it; and stated that she had not spoken with Antoine Leroux during her residence in Paris, and could not recognise his voice. She waited to hear no more after these words met her ear; but the darkness being no obstacle to her, and knowing her way perfectly to the street, though unable to find the remote apartments of an upper story in which the servants slept, she retraced her steps along the passage, passed out of the garden gate, and having reached without difficulty or alarm the Church of the Carmes, which she was in the habit of visiting daily, she felt along the wall with her hands until she touched the door of the hotel adjoining the church, when she rang the bell violently, aroused the concierge, told her story to the man and his wife—who were familiar with the blind lady's appearance, from seeing her take her patient way to the church every day—and remained with the woman while her husband went with the utmost speed to bring the gendarmes to the scene of the outrage.

'This, then, was all that could be known of the drama enacted within those gloomy old walls on that cloudy summer's night! This,

then, was the unconscious fashion after which Isabelle de Corandeuil had avenged her brother! Clémence had concealed from me the fact that she stated falsely to Mademoiselle de Corandeuil that it was I who had passed her in the garden; but, grimly important as the reservation had turned out to be, I pardoned and excused it. She had been marvellously candid for a woman so circumstanced; and it was no wonder, fearing one man so intensely, she should have feared another, to the extent of hiding the use she had made of his name.

‘I know not what length of time had elapsed, from the moment when I fell stunned by the blow, until I found myself a prisoner. It could not have been considerable; and that in which Deligny had to act was, of course, much shorter. In all probability he had consumed but a few minutes in his final proceedings; he might even have passed the blind lady as she made her trembling way along the street. To secure the papers I had with me—my letter to Aline, which contained his history, the memorandum of Comel’s moneys, which furnished a clue to the sums taken and those left, and must have afforded conclusive evidence against him—to drop the key with which her wounds might have been inflicted upon the ground beside the victim of his ferocity, and to place those other keys in my pocket, which seemed to furnish an explanation of my presence, unheard and unsuspected, in the hotel; these were performances as rapid as they were ingenious. The amount of booty with which he had escaped was considerable; the jewels were worth perhaps 7,000 francs, and the sums named in the unfortunate Jean Comel’s list amounted collectively to 22,000 francs. In the breast-pocket of my coat were found gold and notes to the sum of 1,500 francs, and as much more lay on the table and in the iron casket. There was no proof that Jean Comel had possessed more money than these 3,000 francs. Avarice goes far towards the establishment of a reputation for wealth, and no one had ever named the supposed extent of Jean Comel’s riches. I was the only person to whom rumour had ever assigned any knowledge of the matter; and I had been known by the servants to have held private conferences with Comel, from which even his wife had been excluded, on two successive days before the robbery had been perpetrated.

‘The affair of the jewels remained in obscurity. No one in existence, but myself, could fathom that mystery; indeed, no one as yet was aware of their abstraction; it would only become known on the arrival of Eugène de Corandeuil in Paris to investigate the case, and on the discovery being made by Aline, in London, that Madame Delasborde was not the bearer of any article for her. It was not inevitable that the robbery of the jewels should be made public at all; it was in the power of Corandeuil and of Aline to suppress all mention of it; but if it were brought to light, every circumstance connected with it must tell against me. I had spoken to the pretended Madame Delasborde at the door of the Hôtel de Corandeuil; I,

and I alone, had known of the Countess's letter to Comel; it was from my hands that the woman who carried off the jewels had received them. In addition to all this, the real Madame Delasborde's servant could bear witness to my untimely inquiries concerning his mistress, and, doubtless, to my disconcerted and alarmed appearance when I learned that she was not to leave Paris for London so soon as I had supposed. The evidence of Auguste must have been fatal to me; he had heard the old man deny any knowledge of Madame Delasborde's identity, and state, though erroneously, that he had told me on the previous day that he had never seen her. The same person had also received from the lips of Clémence herself, on the same evening, an assurance that Deligny had left Paris; not an intimation of his intention to leave, but of his positive departure.

‘Hour after hour, day after day, and night after night, I thought of all these things, father. I need not describe prison hours to you, who have seen and soothed them for so many. I had none to soothe them for me, and they wore on very heavily and sadly. Sometimes their mere length became intolerable, and I would have hastened the end at any cost. I sometimes wondered whether, if the choice were offered me of instant exculpation, of immediate freedom, or of remaining faithful to Aline, I should have the courage to choose the latter course. I do not know. The choice was never placed before me, and I knew it never could be. My doom was plain, as if it had been pronounced, from the moment I awoke from insensibility on that night, and looked into the face of the gendarmes who stood at either side of me. No mention of Deligny could have saved me; to be sure, it might have ruined him; but he had only to declare me his accomplice, and produce the list of Comel's money in my handwriting, and my case was as bad with him as without him. Something that was mixed terror and sadness seized upon me with this conviction, and it seemed as though light and hope died out for me in that moment. I knew the great end would be gained; I knew that Aline was safe; that beyond possibly a vague rumour associating the Countess de Corandeuil, already known to be of birth inferior to her position, with a criminal—but a rumour so vague, so baseless, that it would die of its own insolidity—no harm could come to my sister of all the deadly harm that had befallen me.

‘And now, father, my story is told. They had but little trouble with me, those clever, subtle lawyers, those stern judges, those fine human laws, in which I saw only human blindness in those days, and a splendid machine by which would-be equity worked supreme injustice. When I had learned all that was to be learned, and when I had exercised every faculty I possessed to its extremest use in considering my case, and seeing if indeed there were any way of escape; and when I knew, as surely as any human truth can be known of *human knowledge*, that there was none, I accepted my fate. Father,

I did not then see and confess that I had made it. The *act d'accusation* was eloquent, crushing, and ingenious. I cannot praise it more highly than by saying it was drawn up with as much accuracy of details, which were not true, as if I had dictated it myself from my mental recapitulation of the appearances against me. I made no defence; I attempted none. The affair was very brief; and at its termination I found myself sentenced to the *travaux forcés* for life. In those days there was a chaplain to the prison in which I lay, who was indeed well fitted for the post he filled there. I had no religion at that time, father; but I knew that the irreligious can find no truer or trustier friends than those who live by the faith which they despise. The time had passed now in which external aid could avail me, and my greatest, my most pressing care for the present was to find some means of communicating the truth to Aline, of making her understand that nothing she could do could avail to change or to alleviate my destiny; some means by which to show her that, if indeed there happened to be truth in that doctrine of good and evil, of temptation and resistance, of sin and retribution, at which she had been used to scoff, that truth had now found her and me out, and retribution had come to her in her powerlessness to save or help me. I knew her life must be little less terrible than mine; that it must have the same elements differently distributed. The Countess and the *forçat* would alike be in false positions. For years I used to wonder which part was the more difficult to play; but for a greater number of years I have been certain on that point.

‘But I wander from my tale, which is very nearly told. I, who had never bowed my knee in prayer since childhood; I, who had never sought the solace of any ordinance of religion, now accepted the priest’s ministrations, because I wanted his help. I told him in confession the substance of the story I have now told you; and I besought him to write to my sister for me—to tell her the truth in outline, and to show her the utter hopelessness of all interference. I asked him to add, that I loved her fervently, and would so love her till the end of my life, and that I held our lots as equal—ay, equal—though she had loved two human beings, one of whom was dead, a traitor to her, and the other faithful to her, a *forçat*; and I had loved one, a countess, a *grande dame*. The priest did my bidding; and spoke many words to me, which fell into stony ground then, and did not spring up into life until the rains of suffering and the plough of severe toil and bitter humiliation had softened and broken it up, and then his own gray head rested in kinder earth. I knew when he died. We learn prison news in the *chiourme* (they wonder how, and they will have to go on wondering); and I felt lonelier in my loneliness, and yet thanked God for the faithful servant who had entered into his rest. He did my bidding; and before I was sent hither, he contrived to let me know that he had done it. * * *

‘If any one should ever pretend to tell the story of the inner life of a *forçat* whose lot is cast in the *chiourme* until his death, he will need

superhuman insight, and more courage than is given to most men. I make no such attempt, father. The merciful law of nature, which makes phases of feeling and degrees of suffering shortlived as the seasons, though succeeding each other with similar regularity; the merciful construction of man, which renders the evil sufficient to the day, but does not permit it to be burdened with the load carried through the hours of yesterday, or darkened by the shadow of the blackness of to-morrow;—these ordinances are in full and free operation in the mental life of one whose external existence is different from that of those who were his fellows when he was free, in that it lacks the great elements of theirs—hope, excitement, uncertainty, and variety.

‘I had lived (as No. 608, for such was the cipher upon my badge, full of a mysterious meaning for me) through all phases of disgust, revolt, sullen anguish, acute wretchedness, torturing memory, keen passionate longings for unattainable pleasures, torturing visions of that flower-crowned poison-chalice of sin and sensuality which I had drunk when I was a free man, and, as I fancied, the master of my own fate. I had lived through unspeakable horror, unsurmountable loathing of my enforced companionship with men who were no more vicious than I had been, but who were infinitely coarser and more brutal, and who therefore offended my taste, though my seared conscience would not have shrunk from them. I had lived through fierce rebellion against my fate, through sickening, abject despair, but silently, and making no sign of any of these things; and the years were rolling away, when dimly—and with a long and chilly twilight, like those of the mornings in mid-winter, when our task-work found us numbed with cold, and trembling with the insufficiency of our rest—a new day dawned upon me; a day on which the grace of God found me murmuring against man’s injustice, and bade me look through the veil which hid it, and behold the eternal justice of God behind this flagrant example of human fallibility. Man had indeed condemned me for a crime which I had not committed, but God’s hand was laid upon me for sins beyond the ken of my fellows. The light was flung backwards, in a broad glare of revelation and conviction, upon the pathway through which my life had wended, from which it had been turned aside; and I beheld, and it was the broad road that leads to destruction. And then I learned that my fellow-men counted for nothing in all that had befallen me, and that it was with God I had to do. That lesson brought great fear with it; fear that abode long with me, but that changed, in God’s time, into His peace, which passes the understanding, not only of those who have it not, but of those whom His infinite mercy has made to dwell under its shadow.

‘I had been a *forçat* for ten years, when a fearful pestilence broke out in the *chiourmes*. As you know, father, our different gangs and our several gangs are here so marked out, and divided by such inexorable rules, and identity is so utterly lost, that we know nothing

of the inmates of the *chiourmes* beyond our own quarters and the scene of our own labours. A temporary interruption of this discipline took place on the occasion of the pestilence of 1830. And one day a number of men of my gang, including myself, were told off for the duty of burying the dead belonging to a distant section. We were duly marched to the scene of our revolting and dangerous task; and as I bent reverently to execute the first portion of mine, which consisted of lifting the corpse, by whose side I had been halted, into the rough wooden shell which stood on the floor beside the rude bed, I recognised, through all the ghastly ravages wrought by pestilential sickness, in the dark worn face of the dead man, the features of Achille Deligny!

‘And I had raved at man’s injustice, and doubted the wisdom and the power of the Supreme Judge! Father, I recognised that day how terrible, but how blessed a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!’

“Here,” said Mr. K—, laying down the manuscript, “ends this tale of the *travaux forcés*, so far as it was told to Père Rougemont by No. 608; but when he lent me the manuscript of which this is a copy, he told me that he had, on leaving Toulon and returning to Paris, made every effort to discover the fate of the Countess de Corandeuil. He ascertained that the Count and Countess had never resided in Paris again after 1820, but had sold the Hôtel and also the Château de Corandeuil. After some time, Père Rougemont learned that Eugène de Corandeuil had died in London at about the same period as that at which he had heard the history of No. 608.

“A few years later, and quite accidentally, he found the widowed and childless Countess an active, devoted, energetic, and useful, though stern, member of the famous Belgian *béguinage*.

“In the autumn of 1856, in answer to an inquiry directed to the then resident chaplain, Père Rougemont learned that No. 608 had been laid in the nameless grave of a *forçat* early in that year, the thirty-sixth of his servitude in the *travaux forcés*.”

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

I.

God save you, merry gentlemen! let nothing you dismay,
And joyous be your festival this holy Christmas Day;
And let the yule-log blaze away and scare the midnight gloom,
While the winter wind is howling around your pleasant room;
And let the ruddy wine flash up, and jocund songs go round,
While the waits their antique music bring, and the boisterous bells
resound.

For lo, it is the time of joy—of Christ our Saviour's birth,
Who was the first true gentleman that ever trod this earth.*

II.

God save you, lovely ladies all! as in the dance ye go,
Or blush to find a conqueror 'neath mystic mistletoe!
For lo, it was a lady bright—of royal race was she—
To whose fair breast clung baby Christ in distant Galilee.
O, who can tell her wonder and terror and delight,
When the presence of the Holy One o'ershadowed her at night?
O, who can dream her gladness, on that humble stable-sod,
When she heard her Child's first feeble cry, and knew that Child
was God?

III.

God save the poor and weary ones! for Christ our King was poor,
And they made His infant cradle behind a stable door;
In palace chambers dwelt He not, nor sought soft beds for sleep:
O, be ye tender to the poor, if ye would Christmas keep!
O, never grasp your gold too hard, or sneer at human woe,
But let gay hearts and generous hands together always go!
May gentle thoughts and liberal deeds within our land increase!
God save our Sovereign Lady, and keep the Realm in peace!

MORTIMER COLLINS.

(* This boldly expressed idea is borrowed from the second part of a play by Thomas Decker, bearing a title offensive to modern notions of refinement, but nevertheless stored with passages of exquisite beauty, like the following :

"Duke. . . . He whose breast is tender, blood so cool
That no wrongs heat it, is a patient fool;
What comfort do you find in being so cool?
Candino. That which green wounds receive from sov'reign balm.
Patience, my lord! why, 'tis the soul of peace;
Of all the virtues 'tis nearest kin to heaven;
It makes men look like gods. The best of men
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer,
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit—
The first true gentleman that ever breath'd."

"This," says Hazlitt, in his *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, "was honest old Decker; and the lines ought to embalm his memory to every one who has a sense either of religion, or philosophy, or humanity, or true genius."—Ed. Belgrave.]

BELGRAVIA

FEBRUARY 1867

BIRDS OF PREY

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c

Book the Third

HEAPING UP RICHES

CHAPTER III. GEORGE SHELDON'S PROSPECTS

FOR George Sheldon the passing years had brought very little improvement of fortune. He occupied his old dingy chambers in Gray's-inn, which had grown more dingy under the hand of time; and he was wont to sit in his second-floor window on sultry summer Sundays, smoking his solitary cigar, and listening to the cawing of the rooks in the gardens beneath him, mingled with the voices of rebellious children, and shrill mothers threatening to "do for them," or to "flay them alive," in Somebody's Rents below. The lawyer used to be quite meditative on those Sunday afternoons, and would wonder what sort of a fellow Lord Bacon was, and how he contrived to get into a mess about taking bribes, when so many other fellows had done it quietly enough before the Lord of Verulam's day, and even yet more quietly since; agreeably instigated thereto by the pleasant casuistry of Escobar. Mr. Sheldon's prospects were by no means promising. From afar off he beheld his brother's star shining steadily in the commercial firmament; but except for an occasional dinner, he was very little the better for the stockbroker's existence. He had reminded his brother very often, and very persistently, of that vague promise which the dentist had made in the hour of his adversity—the promise to help his brother if he ever did "drop into a good thing." But as it is difficult to prevent a man who is disposed to shuffle from shuffling out of the closest agreement that was ever made between Jones of the one part, and Smith of the other part, duly signed and witnessed and stamped with the sixpenny seal of infallibility; so is it still more difficult to obtain the performance of loosely-worded promises, uttered in the confidential intercourse of kinsmen.

In the first year of his married life Philip Sheldon gave his brother a hundred pounds for the carrying out of some grand scheme which the lawyer was then engaged in, and which, if successful, would secure for him a much larger fortune than Georgy's thousands. Unhappily the grand scheme was a failure; and the hundred pounds being gone, George applied again to his brother, reminding him once more of that promise made in Bloomsbury. But on this occasion Mr. Sheldon plainly told his kinsman that he could do no more for him.

"You must fight your own battle, George," he said, "as I have fought mine."

"Thank you, Philip," said the younger brother; "I would rather fight it any other way."

And then the two men looked at each other, as they were in the habit of doing sometimes, with a singularly intent gaze.

"You're very close-fisted with Tom Halliday's money," George said presently. "If I'd asked poor old Tom himself, I'm sure he wouldn't have refused to lend me two or three hundred."

"Then it's a pity you didn't ask him," Mr. Sheldon answered with supreme coolness.

"I should have done so, fast enough, if I had thought he was going to die so suddenly. It was a bad day for me, and for him too, when he came to Fitzgeorge-street."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Mr. Sheldon sharply.

"You can pretty well guess my meaning, I should think," George answered in a sulky tone.

"No, I can't; and what's more, I don't mean to try. I'll tell you what it is, Master George, you've been treating me to a good many hints and innuendoes lately; and you must know very little of me if you don't know that I'm the last kind of man to stand that sort of thing from you, or from any one else. You have tried to take the tone of a man who has some kind of hold upon another. You had better understand at once that such a tone won't answer with me. If you had any hold upon me, or any power over me, you'd be quick enough to use it; and you ought to be aware that I know that, and can see to the bottom of such a shallow little game as yours."

Mr. Sheldon the younger looked at his brother with an expression of surprise that was not entirely unmingled with admiration.

"Well, you *are* a cool hand, Phil!" he said.

Here the conversation ended. The two brothers were very good friends after this, and George presented himself at the gothic villa whenever he received an invitation to dine there. The dinners were good, and the men who ate them were men of solidity and standing in the commercial world; and George was very glad to eat good dinners, and to meet eligible men; but he never again asked his brother for the loan of odd hundreds.

He grubbed on, as best he might, in the dingy Gray's-inn cham-

bers. He had a little business—business which lay chiefly amongst men who wanted to borrow money, or whose halting footsteps required guidance through the quagmire of the Bankruptcy Court. He just contrived to keep his head above water, and his name in the Law-list, by means of such business; but the great scheme of his life remained as yet unripened, an undeveloped shadow to which he had in vain attempted to give a substance.

The leading idea of George Sheldon's life was the idea that there were great fortunes in the world waiting for claimants; and that a share of some such fortune was to be obtained by any man who had the talent to dig it out of the obscurity in which it was hidden. He was a student of old county histories, and a searcher of old newspapers; and his studies in that line had made him familiar with many strange stories: stories of field-labourers called away from the plough to be told they were the rightful owners of forty thousand a year; stories of old white-haired men starving to death in miserable garrets, about Bethnal-green or Spitalfields, who could have claimed lands and riches immeasurable, had they known how to claim them; stories of half crazy old women, who had wandered about the world with reticules of discoloured papers clamorously asserting their rights and wrongs unheeded and unbelieving, until they encountered sharp-witted lawyers who took up their claims, and carried them triumphantly into the ownership of illimitable wealth.

George Sheldon had read of these things until it had seemed to him that there must be some such chance for any man who would have patience to watch and wait for it. He had taken up several cases, and had fitted link after link together with extreme labour, and had hunted in parish registers until the cold mouldy atmosphere of vestries was as familiar to him as the air of Gray's-inn. But the cases had all broken down at more or less advanced stages; and after infinite patience and trouble, a good deal of money spent upon travelling and small fees to all manner of small people, and an incalculable number of hours wasted in listening to the rambling discourse of parish-clerks and oldest inhabitants, Mr. Sheldon had been compelled to abandon his hopes time after time, until a man with less firmly rooted ideas would have given up the hunting of registers and grubbing up of genealogies as a delusion and a snare.

George Sheldon's ideas were very firmly rooted, and he stuck to them with that dogged persistency which so often achieves great ends, that it seems a kind of genius. He saw his brother's success, and contemplated the grandeurs of the gothic villa in a cynical rather than an envious spirit. How long would it all last; how long would the stock-broker float triumphantly onward upon that wonderful tide which is constituted by the rise and fall of the money-market?

"That sort of thing is all very well while a man keeps his head cool and clear," thought George; "but somehow or other men always

seem to lose their heads on the Stock Exchange before they have done with it, and I darsay my wise brother will drop into a nice mess sooner or later. Setting aside all other considerations, I think I would rather have my chances than his; for I speculate very little more than my time and trouble, and I stand in to win a bigger sum than he will ever get in his line, let stocks rise and fall as they may."

During that summer in which Miss Halliday bade farewell to Hyde Lodge and her school-days, George Sheldon was occupied with the early steps in a search which he hoped would end in the discovery of a prize rich enough to reward him for all his wasted time and labour.

Very early in that year there had appeared the following brief notice in the *Observer*:

"The Rev. John Haygarth, late vicar of Tilford Haven, Norfolk, died lately, without a will, or relation to claim his property, 100,000*l.* The Crown therefore claimed it. And last court-day the Prerogative Court of Canterbury decreed letters of administration to Mr. Paul, the nominee of the Crown."

Some months after this an advertisement had been inserted in the *Times* newspaper to the following effect:

"NEXT OF KIN.—If the relatives or next of kin of the Rev. John Haygarth, late vicar of Tilford Haven, in the county of Norfolk, clerk, deceased, will apply, either personally or by letter, to Stephen Paul, Esq., solicitor for the affairs of her Majesty's Treasury, at the Treasury Chambers, Whitehall, London, they may hear of something to their advantage. The late Rev. John Haygarth is supposed to have been the son of John Haygarth, late of the parish of St. Judith, London, and Sarah his wife, formerly Sarah Copeland, spinster, late of Langford-court, Soho, in the county of Middlesex; both long since deceased."

Upon the strength of this advertisement George Sheldon began his search. His theory was, that there always existed an heir-at-law somewhere, if people would only have the patience to hunt him or her out; and he attributed his past failures rather to a want of endurance on his own part than to the breaking down of his pet theory.

On this occasion he began his work with more than usual determination.

"This is the biggest chance I've ever had," he said to himself, "and I should be something worse than a fool if I let it slip through my fingers."

The work was very dry and dreary, involving interminable hunting of registers, and questioning of oldest inhabitants. And the oldest inhabitants were so stupid, and the records of the registers so bewildering. One after another Mr. Sheldon set himself to examine the lines of the intestate's kindred and ancestors: his father's brothers and sisters, his grandfather's brothers and sisters, and even to the brothers and sisters of his great-grandfather. At that point the Haygarth family melted away into the impenetrable darkness

of the past. They were no high and haughty race of soldiers and scholars, churchmen and lawyers, or the tracing of them would have been a much easier matter. Burke would have told of them. There would have been old country houses filled with portraits, and garrulous old housekeepers learned in the traditions of the past. There would have been mouldering tombs and tarnished brasses in quiet country churches, with descriptive epitaphs, and many escutcheons. There would have been crumbling parchments recording the prowess of Sir Reginald, knight, or the learning of Sir Rupert, counsellor and judge. The Haygarths were a race of provincial tradesmen; and had left no better record of their jog-trot journey through this world than the registry of births, marriages, and deaths, in obscure churches, or an occasional entry in the fly-leaf of a family Bible.

At present Mr. Sheldon was only at the beginning of his work. The father and grandfather and uncle and great-uncles, the great-grandfather and great-great-uncles, with all their progenies, lay before him in a maze of entanglement which it would be his business to unravel. And as he was obliged to keep his limited legal connection together, while he devoted himself to this task, the work promised to extend over months, or indeed years; and in the mean while there was always the fear that some one else, as quick-witted and indefatigable as himself, would take up the same tangled skein and succeed in the unravelment of it. Looking this fact full in the face, Mr. Sheldon decided that he must have an able and reliable coadjutor; but to find such a coadjutor, to find a man who would help him, on the chance of success, and not claim too large a share of the prize if success came, was more than the speculative attorney could hope. In the mean time his work progressed very slowly; and he was tormented by perpetual terror of that other sharp practitioner who might be following up the same clue, and whose agents might watch him in and out of parish churches, and listen at street-corners when he was hunting an oldest inhabitant.

CHAPTER IV.

DIANA FINDS A NEW HOME.

THE holidays at Hyde Lodge brought at least repose for Diana Paget. The little ones had gone home, with the exception of two or three young colonists, and even they had perpetual liberty from lessons; so Diana had nothing to do but sit in the shady garden, reading or thinking, in the drowsy summer afternoons. Priscilla Paget had departed with the chief of the teachers for a seaside holiday; other governesses had gone to their homes; and but for the presence of an elderly French woman, who slept through one half of the day, and wrote letters to her kindred during the other half, Diana would have been the only responsible person in the deserted habitation.

She did not complain of her loneliness, or envy the delights of those who had departed. She was very glad to be quite alone, free to think her own thoughts, free to brood over those unforgotten years in which she had wandered over the face of the earth with her father and Valentine Hawkehurst. The few elder girls remaining at the Lodge thought Miss Paget unsociable because she preferred a lonely corner in the gardens and some battered old book of namby-pamby stories to the delights of their society, and criticised her very severely as they walked listlessly to and fro upon the lawn with big garden-hats, and arms entwined about each others' waists.

Alas for Diana, the battered book was only an excuse for solitude, and for a morbid indulgence in her own sad thoughts! She had lived the life of unblemished respectability for a year; and looking back now at the Bohemian wanderings, she regretted those days of humiliation and misery, and sighed for the rare delights of that disreputable past! Yes, she had revolted against the degraded existence; and now she was sorry for having lost its uncertain pleasures, its fitful glimpses of sunshine. Was that true which Valentine had said, that no man can eat beef and mutton every day of his life; that it is better to be unutterably miserable one day and uproariously happy the next, than to tread one level path of dull content? Miss Paget began to think that there had been some reason in her old comrade's philosophy; for she found the level path very dreary. She let her thoughts wander whither they would in this quiet holiday idleness, and they went back to the years which she had spent with her father. She thought of winter evenings in London when Valentine had taken her the round of the theatres, and they had sat together in stifling upper boxes,—she pleased, he critical, and with so much to say to each other in the pauses of the performance. How kind he had been to her; how good, how brotherly! And then the pleasant walk home, through crowded noisy thoroughfares, and anon by long lines of quiet streets, in which they used to look up at the lighted windows of houses where parties were being given, and sometimes stop to listen to the music and watch the figures of the dancers flitting across the blinds. She thought of the journeys she had travelled with her father and Valentine by land and sea; the lonely moonlight watches on the decks of steamers; the long chill nights in railway-carriages under the feeble glimmer of an oil-lamp, and how she and Valentine had beguiled the tedious hours with wild purposeless talk while Captain Paget slept. She remembered the strange cities which she and her father's protégé had looked at side by side: he with a calm listlessness of manner, which might either be real or assumed, but which never varied; she with an inward tremor of excitement and surprise. They had been very happy together, this lonely unprotected girl and the reckless adventurer. If his manner to her had been fitful, it had been sometimes dangerously, fatally kind. She looked back now, and remembered the days which she had spent with him, and knew that all

the pleasures possible in a prosperous and successful life could never bring for her such delight as she had known in the midst of her wanderings; though shame and danger lurked at every corner, and poverty, disguised in that tawdry masquerade habit in which the swindler dresses it, accompanied her wherever she went.

She had been happy with him because she had loved him. That close companionship, sisterly and brotherly though it had seemed, had been fatal for the lonely and friendless daughter of Horatio Paget. In her desolation she had clung to the one creature who was kind to her, who did not advertise his disdain for herself and her sex, or openly avow that she was a nuisance and an encumbrance. Every slight put upon her by her father had strengthened the chain that bound her to Valentine Hawkehurst; and as the friendship between them grew closer day by day, until all her thoughts and fancies took their colour from his, it seemed a matter of course that he should love her, and she never doubted his feelings or questioned her own. There had been much in his conduct to justify her belief that she was beloved; so this inexperienced, untutored girl may surely be forgiven if she rested her faith in that fancied affection, and looked forward to some shadowy future in which she and Valentine would be man and wife, all in all to each other, free from the trammels of Captain Paget's elaborate schemes, and living honestly, somehow or other, by means of literature, or music, or pen-and-ink caricatures, or some of those liberal arts which have always been dear to the children of Bohemia. They would have lodgings in some street near the Thames, and go to a theatre or a concert every evening, and spend long summer days in suburban parks or on suburban commons, he lying on the grass smoking, she talking to him or reading to him, as his fancy might dictate. Before her twentieth birthday, the proudest woman is apt to regard the man she loves as a grand and superior creature; and there had been a certain amount of reverential awe mingled with Diana's regard for Mr. Hawkehurst, scapegrace and adventurer though he was.

Little by little that bright girlish dream had faded away. Fancy's enchanted palace had been shattered into a heap of shapeless ruin by those accidental scraps of hard worldly wisdom with which Valentine had pelted the fairy fabric. He a man to love, or to marry for love! Why, he talked like some hardened world-weary sinner who had done with every human emotion. The girl shuddered as she heard him. She had loved him, and believed in his love. She had fancied a tender meaning in the voice which softened when it spoke to her, a pensive earnestness in the dark eyes which looked at her; but just when the voice had seemed softest and sweetest, the pensive eyes most eloquently earnest, the adventurer's manner had changed all at once, and for ever. He had grown hard and cold and indifferent. He had scarcely tried to conceal the fact that the girl's companionship bored and wearied him. He had yawned in her face, and had abandoned himself to

moody abstraction when accident obliged him to be alone with her. Miss Paget's pride had been equal to the occasion. Mary Anne Kepp would have dissolved into tears at the first unkind word from the lips of her beloved; but Mary Anne Kepp's daughter, with the blood of the Cromie Pagets in her veins, was quite a different person. She returned Mr. Hawkehurst's indifference with corresponding disregard. If his manner was cold as a bleak autumn, hers was icy as a severe winter; only now and then, when she was very tired of her joyless existence, her untutored womanhood asserted itself, and she betrayed the real state of her feelings—betrayed herself as she had done on her last night at Forêtdechêne, when she and Valentine had looked down at the lighted windows shining dimly through the vaporous purple of the summer night. She looked back at the past now in the quiet of the school-garden, and tried to remember how miserable she had been, what agonies of despair she had suffered, how brief had been her delights, how bitter her disappointments. She tried to remember what tortures she had suffered from that wasted passion, that useless devotion. She tried to rejoice in the consciousness of the peace and respectability of her present life: but she could not. That passionate yearning for the past possessed her so strongly. She could remember nothing except that she had been with him. She had seen his face, she had heard his voice; and now how long and weary the time might be before she could again see that one beloved face or hear the dear familiar voice! The brightest hope she had in these midsummer holidays was the hope of a letter from him; and even that might be the prelude of disappointment. She wrestled with herself, and tried to exorcise those ghosts of memory which haunted her by day and wove themselves into her dreams by night; but they were not to be laid at rest. She hated her folly; but her folly was stronger than herself.

For three weeks Diana Paget had no companions but her sorrowful memories—her haunting shadows; but at the end of that time the stagnant mill-pond of her life was suddenly ruffled—the dull course of existence was disturbed by the arrival of two letters. She found them lying by her plate upon the breakfast-table one bright July morning; and while she was yet far away from the table she could see that one of the envelopes bore a foreign stamp, and was directed by the hand of Valentine Hawkehurst. She seated herself at the table in a delicious flutter of emotion, and tore open that foreign envelope; while the French governess poured out the tea, and while the little group of school-girls nudged one another and watched her eager face with insolent curiosity.

The first letter contained only a few lines.

"MY DEAR DIANA," wrote the young man, "your father has decided on returning to London, where I believe he really intends to make a respectable start, if he can only get the opening and the help he wants.

I know you will be glad to hear this. I don't exactly say where we shall take up our quarters; but the Captain will of course come to see you; and if I can chasten my outward semblance sufficiently to venture within the sacred precincts of a lady's school, I shall come with him. Direct to the old address, if you write before the end of the month, and believe me, as always, your friend,

VALENTINE."

The second letter was in Charlotte Halliday's big bold hand, and was frank, impetuous, and loving as the girl herself.

"MY OWN DEAREST DI,—It is all arranged," wrote Miss Halliday, dashing at once into the heart of the subject. "I talked mamma over the very first day after my return, and then there was nothing more to be done than to talk over Mr. Sheldon. Of course there was just a little difficulty in that, for he is so awfully practical; and he wanted to know why I wanted a companion, and what *use* you would be in the house; as if the very last thing one required in a companion was companionship. I'm almost afraid to tell you the iniquitous fables I invented about your extreme usefulness: your genius for millinery, and the mints of money you would save by making-up mamma's flimsy little caps; your taste for dress-making, &c., &c., &c. You *are* the cleverest creature in the world, you know, Di; for you must remember how you altered that green-silk dress for me when Miss Porson had made me a square-shouldered fright. So, after a great deal of humming and ha-ing and argufication—*is* there such a word as 'argufication,' I wonder?—my step-father said that if my heart was set upon having you, and if I thought you would be useful, you might come to us; but that he could not afford to give you any salary, and that if you wanted a new dress now and then, I must buy it for you out of my own allowance; and I will, darling, if you will only come and be my friend and sister. My life is dreadfully dull without you. I walk up and down the stiff little gravel paths, and stare at the geraniums and calceolarias. Mariana might have been dreary in her moated grange; but I daresay the Lincolnshire flowers grew wild and free, and she was spared the abomination of gaudy little patches of red and yellow, and waving ribbons of blue and white, which constitute the glory of modern gardening. Do come to me, dear. I have no one to talk to, and nothing to do. Mamma is a dear good affectionate soul; but she and I don't understand each other. I don't care for her twittering little birds, and she doesn't care for my whims and fancies. I have read novels until I am tired. I am not allowed to go out by myself, and mamma can scarcely walk to Kensington-gardens without sinking under the exertion. We drive out sometimes; but I am sick to death of crawling slowly up and down by the Serpentine staring at people's bonnets. I might enjoy it, perhaps, if I had you with me to make fun out of some of the bonnets. The house is very comfortable; but it always seems to me unplea-

santly like some philanthropic institution in miniature. I long to scratch the walls, or break the windows; and I begin to understand the feelings of those unhappy paupers who tear up their clothes; they get utterly tired of their stagnation, you see, and must do something wicked and rebellious rather than do nothing at all. You will take pity upon my forlorn state, won't you, Di? I shall come to Hyde Lodge to-morrow afternoon with mamma, to hear your *ulti*—what's its name?—and in the mean while, and for ever afterwards, believe me to be your devoted and unchanging

LOTTA."

Diana Paget's eyes grew dim as she read this letter.

"I love her very dearly," she thought, "but not one hundred-fold as much as I ought to love her."

And then she went back to Mr. Hawkehurst's epistle, and read and re-read its half-dozen lines, wondering when he would come to London, and whether she would see him when he came. To see him again! The thought of that possibility seemed like a spot of vivid light, which dazzled her eyes and made them blind to any thing around or beyond it. As for this offer of a strange home in the household of Mr. Sheldon, it seemed to her a matter of so very little importance where she went or what became of her, that she was quite willing to let other people decide her existence. Any thing would be better than the monotony of Hyde Lodge. If Valentine Hawkehurst came to see her at Mr. Sheldon's house, he would be permitted to see her alone, most likely, and it would be something like the old times; whereas at the Lodge Priscilla Paget or one of the governesses would undoubtedly be present at any interview between Diana and her old friend, and the real Valentine would be hidden under the semblance of a respectable young man, with very little to say for himself. Perhaps this one thought exercised considerable influence over Miss Paget's decision. She wanted so much to see Valentine alone, to know whether he had changed, to see his face at the first moment of meeting, and to discover, if possible, the solution of that enigma which was the grand mystery of her life—that one perpetual question which was always repeating itself in her brain—whether he was altogether cold and indifferent, or if there was not some hidden warmth, some secret tenderness beneath that repelling outward seeming?

In the afternoon Miss Halliday called with Mrs. Sheldon, and there was a long discussion about Diana Paget's future life. Georgy abandoned herself as unhesitatingly to the influence of her daughter as she did to that of her husband, and had been brought to think that it would be the most delightful thing in the world to have Miss Paget for a useful companion.

"And will you really make my caps, dear?" she said, when she had grown at her ease with Diana. "Miss Terly in the Bayswater-road charges me so much for the simplest little lace head-dress; and though

Mr. Sheldon is very good about those sort of things, I know he sometimes thinks my bills rather high."

Diana was very indifferent about her future, and the heart must have been very hard which could have resisted Charlotte's tender pleading; so it was ultimately decided that Miss Paget should write to her kinswoman to describe the offer that had been made to her of a new home, and to inquire if her services could be conveniently dispensed with at Hyde Lodge. After which decision Charlotte embraced her friend with enthusiasm, and departed, bearing off Mrs. Sheldon to the carriage which awaited them at the gates of Priscilla Paget's umbrageous domain.

Diana sighed as she went back to the empty school-room. Even Charlotte's affection could not altogether take the sting out of dependence. To go into a strange house amongst strange people, and to hold a place in it only on the condition of being perpetually useful and unflinching good-tempered and agreeable, is scarcely the pleasantest prospect which this world can offer to a proud and beautiful woman. Diana remembered her bright vision of Bohemianism in a lodging near the Strand. It would be very delightful to ride on sufferance in Mrs. Sheldon's carriage, no doubt; but O, how much pleasanter it would have been to sit by Valentine Hawkehurst in a hansom cab spinning along the road to Greenwich or Richmond!

She had promised to despatch her letter to Priscilla by that afternoon's post, and she kept her promise. The reply came by return of post, and was very kind. Priscilla advised her by all means to accept Miss Halliday's offer, which would give her a much better position than that which she occupied at Hyde Lodge. She would have time to improve herself, no doubt, Priscilla said, and might be able to hope for something still better in the course of two or three years; "for you must look the world straight in the face, Diana," wrote the school-mistress, "as I did before I was your age; and make up your mind to rely upon your own exertions, since you know what your father is, and how little you have to hope for from him. As you are to have no salary with the Sheldons, and will no doubt be expected to make a good appearance, I shall do what I can to help you with your wardrobe."

This letter decided the fate of Captain Paget's daughter. A week after Miss Halliday's visit to Hyde Lodge a hack cab carried Diana and all her earthly possessions to the Lawn, where Charlotte received her with open arms, and where she was inducted into a neatly furnished bed-chamber adjoining that of her friend. Mr. Sheldon scrutinised her keenly from under the shadow of his thick black brows when he came home to dinner. He treated her with a stiff kind of politeness during the orderly progress of the meal; and once, when he looked at her, he was surprised to find that she was contemplating him with an expression of mingled wonder and reverence.

He was the first eminently respectable man whom Miss Paget had ever encountered in familiar intercourse, and she was regarding him attentively, as an individual with scientific tastes might regard some natural curiosity.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE LAWN.

LIFE at the Lawn went by very smoothly for Mr. Sheldon's family. Georgy was very happy in the society of a companion who seemed really to have a natural taste for the manufacture of pretty little head-dresses from the merest fragments of material in the way of lace and ribbon. Diana had all that versatile cleverness and capacity for expedients which is likely to be acquired in a wandering and troubled life. She had learned more in her three years of discomfort with her father than in all the undeviating course of the Hyde Lodge studies; she had improved her French at one *table d'hôte*, her German at another; she had caught some new trick of style in every concert-room, some fresh combination of costume on every racecourse; and, being really grateful for Charlotte's disinterested affection, she brought all her accomplishments to bear to please her friend and her friend's household.

In this she succeeded admirably. Mrs. Sheldon found her daughter's society much more delightful now that the whole pressure of Charlotte's intellect and vitality no longer fell entirely upon herself. She liked to sit lazily in her arm-chair while the two girls chattered at their work, and she could venture an occasional remark, and fancy that she had a full share in the conversation. When the summer weather rendered walking a martyrdom, and driving an affliction, she could recline on her favourite sofa reading a novel, soothed by the feeble twittering of her birds; while Charlotte and Diana went out together, protected by the smart boy in buttons, who was not altogether without human failings, and was apt to linger behind his fair charges, reading the boards before the doors of newsvendors' shops, or looking at the cartoons in *Punch* exhibited in the stationers' windows.

Mr. Sheldon made a point of pleasing his step-daughter whenever it was possible for him to do so without palpable inconvenience to himself; and as she was to be gratified by so small a pecuniary sacrifice as the trifling increase of tradesmen's bills caused by Miss Paget's residence in the gothic villa, he was the last man in the world to refuse her that indulgence. His own pursuits were of so absorbing a nature as to leave little leisure for concern about other people's business. He asked no questions about his step-daughter's companion; but he was not the less surprised to see this beautiful high-bred woman content to sit at his board as an unsalaried dependent.

"Your friend Miss Paget looks like a countess," he said one day to Charlotte. "I thought girls generally pitched upon some plain homely

young woman for their pet companion, but you seem to have chosen the handsomest girl in the school."

"Yea, she is very handsome, is she not? I wish some of your rich City men would marry her, papa."

Miss Halliday consented to call her mother's husband "Papa," though the caressing name seemed in a manner to stick in her throat. She had loved that blustering good-tempered Tom Halliday so very dearly, and it was only to please poor Georgy that she brought herself to address any other man by the name that had been his.

"My City men have something better to do than to marry a young woman without a sixpence," answered Mr. Sheldon. "Why don't you try to catch one of them for yourself?"

"I don't like City men," said Charlotte quickly; and then she blushed, and added apologetically, "at least not the generality of City men, papa."

Diana had waited until her destiny was settled before answering Valentine Hawkehurst's letter; but she wrote to him directly she was established at the Lawn, and told him the change in her plans.

"I think papa had better let me come to see him at his lodgings," she said, "wherever they may be; for I should scarcely care about Mr. Sheldon seeing him. No one here knows any thing definite about my history; and as it is just possible Mr. Sheldon may have encountered my father somehow or other, it would be as well for him to keep clear of this house. I could not venture to say this to papa myself, but perhaps you could suggest it without offending him. You see I have grown very worldly-wise, and am learning to protect my own interests in the spirit which you have so instilled into me. I don't know whether that sort of spirit is likely to secure one's happiness, but I have no doubt it is the wisest and best for this world."

Miss Paget could not refrain from an occasional sneer when she wrote to her old companion. He never returned her sneers, or noticed them. His letters were always frank, friendly, and brotherly in tone.

"Neither my good opinion nor my bad opinion is of any consequence to him," Diana thought bitterly.

It was late in August when Captain Paget and his protégé came to town. Valentine suggested the wisdom of leaving Diana in her new home uncompromised by any past associations. But this was a suggestion which Horatio Paget could not accept. His brightest successes in the way of scheming had been matured out of chance acquaintanceships with eligible men. A man who could afford such a luxury as a companion for his daughter must needs be eligible, and the Captain was not inclined to sacrifice his acquaintance from any extreme delicacy.

"My daughter seems to have made new friends for herself, and I should like to see what kind of people they are," he said conclusively. "We'll look them up this evening, Val."

Mr. George Sheldon dined at the Lawn on the day on which Horatio Paget determined on "looking up" his daughter's new friends, and he and the two girls were strolling in the garden when the Captain and Mr. Hawkehurst were announced. They had been told that Miss Paget was in the garden.

"Be good enough to take me straight to her," said the Captain to the boy in buttons; "I am her father."

Horatio Paget was too old a tactician not to know that by an unceremonious plunge into the family circle he was more likely to secure an easy footing in the household than by any direct approach of the master. He had seen the little group in the garden, and had mistaken George for the head of the house.

Diana turned from pale to red, and from red to pale again; as she recognised the two men. There had been no announcement of their coming. She did not even know that they were in England.

"Papa!" she cried, and then held out her hand and greeted him; coldly enough, as it seemed to Charlotte, who fancied that any kind of *real* father must be very dear.

But Captain Paget was not to be satisfied by that cold greeting. It suited his purpose to be especially paternal on this occasion. He drew his daughter to his breast and embraced her affectionately, very much to that young lady's surprise.

Then, having abandoned himself entirely for the moment to this tender impulse of paternity, he suddenly put his daughter aside, as if he had all at once remembered his duty to society, drew himself up stiffly, and saluted Miss Halliday and George Sheldon with uncovered head.

"Mr. Sheldon, I believe?" he murmured.

"George Sheldon," answered that gentleman; "my brother Philip is in the drawing-room yonder, looking at us."

Philip Sheldon came out into the garden as George said this. It was one of those sultry evenings on which the most delightful of gothic villas is apt to be too stifling for endurance; and in most of the prim suburban gardens there were people lounging listlessly among the flower-beds. Mr. Sheldon came to look at this patrician stranger who had just embraced his daughter's companion; whereupon Captain Paget introduced himself and his friend Mr. Hawkehurst. After the introduction Mr. Sheldon and the Captain fell into an easy conversation, while the two girls walked slowly along the gravel pathway with Valentine by their side, and while George loitered drearily along chewing the stalk of a geranium, and pondering the obscure reminiscences of the last oldest inhabitant whose shadowy memories he had evoked in his search after new links in the chain of the Haygarths.

The two girls walked in the familiar school-girl fashion of Hyde Lodge, Charlotte's arm encircling the waist of her friend. They were





Edwards, del.

Edmund Evans, sc.

both dressed in white muslin, and looked very shadowy and sylph-like in the summer dusk. Mr. Hawkehurst found himself in a new atmosphere in this suburban garden, with these two white-robed damsels by his side; for it seemed to him that Diana with Charlotte's arm round her waist, and a certain shy gentleness of manner which was new to him, was quite a different person from that Miss Paget whose wan face had looked at him so anxiously in the saloons of the Belgian Kursaal.

At first there was considerable restraint in the tone of the conversation, and some little of that unnecessary discussion as to whether this evening was warmer than the preceding evening, or whether it was not, indeed, the warmest evening of all that summer. And then, when the ice was broken, Mr. Hawkehurst began to talk at his ease about Paris, which city Miss Halliday had never seen; about the last book, the last play, the last folly, the last fashionable bonnet; for it was one of the special attributes of this young Robert Macaire to be able to talk about any thing, and to adapt himself to any society. Charlotte opened her eyes to their widest extent as she listened to this animated stranger. She had been so wearied by the dryasdust arguments of City men who had discussed the schemes of great contractors, "which will never be carried out, sir, while money is at its present rate, mark my words,"—or the chances of a company "which is eaten up by debenture-bonds and preference-shares, sir, and will never pay its original proprietors one sixpence of interest on their capital," with a great deal more of the same character; and it was quite new to her to hear about novels, theatres, and bonnets, from masculine lips, and to find that there were men living who could interest themselves in such frivolities. Charlotte was delighted with Diana's friend. It was she who encouraged Valentine every now and then by some exclamation of surprise or expression of interest, while Miss Paget herself was thoughtful and silent.

It was not thus that she had hoped to meet Valentine Hawkehurst. She stole a look at him now and then as he walked by her side. Yes, it was the old face—the face which would have been so handsome if there had been warmth and life in it, instead of that cold listlessness which repelled all sympathy, and seemed to constitute a kind of mask behind which the real man hid himself.

Diana looked at him, and remembered her parting from him in the chill gray morning on the platform at Forêt-dechêne. He had let her go out alone into the dreary world to encounter what fate she might, without any more appearance of anxiety than he might have exhibited had she been starting for a summer-day's holiday; and now, after a year of separation, he met her with the same air of unconcern, and could discourse conventional small-talk to another woman while she walked by his side.

While Mr. Hawkehurst was talking to Mr. Sheldon's stepdaughter, Captain Paget had contrived to make himself very agreeable to that gentleman himself. Lord Lytton has said that "there is something

strange, and almost mesmeric in the *rapport* between two evil natures. Bring two honest men together, and it is ten to one if they recognise each other as honest; differences in temper, manner, even politics, may make each misjudge the other. But bring together two men unprincipled and perverted—men who, if born in a cellar, would have been food for the hulks or gallows—and they understand each other by instant sympathy." However this might be with these two men, they had speedily become upon very easy terms with each other. Mr. Sheldon's plans for the making of money were very complicated in their nature, and he had frequent need of clever instruments to assist in the carrying out of his arrangements. Horatio Paget was the exact type of man most likely to be useful to such a speculator as Philip Sheldon. He was the very ideal of the "Promoter," the well-dressed, well-mannered gentleman beneath whose magic wand new companies arise as if by magic; the man who, without a sixpence in his own pocket, can set a small Pactolus flowing from the pockets of other people; the man who, content himself to live in a humble second-floor at Chelsea, can point to gigantic hotels which are as the palaces of a monarch of Brobdignag, and say, "Lo, those arose at my bidding!" Mr. Sheldon was always on the alert to discover any thing or any body likely to serve his own interest, either in the present or the future; and he came to the conclusion that Miss Paget's father was a person upon whom an occasional dinner might not be altogether thrown away.

"Take a chop with us to-morrow at six," he said, on parting from the Captain, "and then you can hear the two girls play and sing. They play remarkably well, I believe, from what other people tell me; but I am not a musical man myself."

Horatio Paget accepted the invitation as cordially as it was given. It is astonishing how genial and friendly these men of the world can be at the slightest imaginable notice. One can fancy the striped tigers of Bengal shaking paws in the jungle, the vultures hob-nobbing in a mountain cleft over the torn carcass of a stag, the kites putting their beaks together after dining on a nest of innocent doves.

"Then we shall expect to see you at sharp six," said Mr. Sheldon, "and your young friend Mr. Hawkehurst with you, of course."

After this the two gentlemen departed; Valentine shook hands with Diana, and took a more ceremonious leave of Charlotte. George Sheldon threw away his chewed geranium-stalk in order to bid good evening to the visitors; and the little party walked to the garden-gate together.

"That Sheldon seems a very clever fellow," said Captain Paget, as he and Valentine walked towards the Park, which they had to cross on their way to Chelsea, where the Captain had secured a convenient lodging. "I wonder whether he is any relation to the Sheldon who is in with a low set of money-lenders?"

"What, the Sheldon of Gray's-inn?" exclaimed Mr. Hawkehurst?
"We can easily find that out."

Horatio Paget and Valentine Hawkehurst were frequent visitors at the Lawn after that first evening. Mr. Sheldon found the Captain useful to him in the carrying out of certain business arrangements on more than one occasion, and the relations between the respectable stock-broker and the disreputable adventurer assumed a very friendly character. Diana wondered to see so spotless a citizen as Philip Sheldon hand-and-glove with her father. Mrs. Sheldon and Charlotte were delighted with the Captain and his protégé; these two penniless Bohemians were so much more agreeable to the feminine mind than the City men who were wont to sit in the dining-room slowly imbibing Mr. Sheldon's old port in the long summer evenings, while their wives endured the abomination of desolation with Georgy and Charlotte in the drawing-room. Captain Paget paid Mrs. Sheldon flowery compliments, and told her delightful stories of the aristocracy and all that shining West-end world with which he had once been familiar. Poor simple Georgy regarded him with that reverential awe which a middle-class country-bred woman is prone to feel for a man who bears upon him that ineffaceable stamp of high birth and good breeding, not to be destroyed by half a century of degradation. Nor could Charlotte withhold her admiration from the man whose tone was so infinitely superior to that of all the other men she had encountered. In his darkest hour Captain Paget had found his best friends, or his easiest dupes, among women. It had gone hard with him when his dear friend had withheld the temporary accommodation of a five-pound note; but it had been much harder when his friend's wife had refused the loan of "a little silver."

Valentine Hawkehurst came very often to the Lawn; sometimes with his friend and patron, sometimes alone. He brought the young ladies small offerings in the way of a popular French novel fit for feminine perusal, or an occasional box for some theatre which had fallen upon evil days, and was liberal in the circulation of "paper." He met the two girls sometimes in their morning walks in Kensington-gardens, and walked with them in the leafy avenues, and only left them at the gate by which they departed. So much of his life was a listless waiting for the arising of new chances, that he had ample time to waste in feminine society, and he seemed very well inclined to loiter away the leisure hours of existence in the companionship of Diana and her friend.

And was Miss Paget glad of his coming, and pleased to be in his company? Alas, no! The time had been, and only within a few months, when she had sickened for the sight of his familiar face, and fancied that the most exquisite happiness life could afford her would be to see him once more, any where, under any circumstances. She

saw him now almost daily, and she was miserable. She saw him; but another woman had come between her and the man she loved; and now, if his voice took a softer tone, or if his eyes assumed a tender earnestness of expression, it might be Charlotte's influence which wrought the transformation. Who could say that it was not on Charlotte's account he came so often, and lingered so long? Diana looked at him sometimes with haggard angry eyes, which saw that it was Miss Halliday who absorbed his attention. It was Charlotte,—Charlotte, who was so bright and happy a creature that the coldest heart must needs have been moved and melted by her fascination. What was the cold patrician beauty of Miss Paget's face when compared with the changeful charm of this radiant girl, with the flashing gray eyes and piquant features, and all those artless caprices of manner which made her arch-loveliness irresistible? Diana's heart grew sick and cold as she watched these two day by day, and saw the innocent school-girl's ascendancy over the adventurer. The attributes which made Charlotte charming were just those very attributes which Valentine Hawkehurst had been least accustomed to discover in the womankind he had hitherto encountered. He had seen beautiful women, elegant and fascinating women, without number; but this frank girlish nature, this happy childlike disposition, was entirely new to him. How should he have met bright childlike creatures in the pathways which he had trodden? For the first time in his life a fresh young heart revealed its treasures of purity and tenderness before his world-weary eyes, and his own heart was melted by the new influence. He had admired Diana; he had been touched by her girlish fancy for him, and had loved her as well as he had believed himself capable of loving any woman. But when Prudence and Honour counselled him to stifle and crush his growing affection for the beautiful companion of his wanderings, the struggle had involved no agony of regret or despair. He had told himself that no good could ever come of his love for Captain Paget's daughter, and he had put aside that love before it had taken any vital root in his heart. He had been very strong and resolute in this matter—resisting looks of sad surprise which would have melted a softer nature. And he had been proud of his own firmness. "Better for her, and better for me," he had said to himself; "let her outlive her foolish school-girl fancies, and wait patiently till her beauty wins her a rich husband. As for me, I must marry some prosperous tradesman's widow, if I ever marry at all."

The influence of the world in which his life had been spent had degraded Valentine Hawkehurst, and had done much to harden him; and yet he was not altogether hard. He discovered his own weakness very soon after the beginning of his acquaintance with Mr. Sheldon's step-daughter. He knew very well that if he had been no fitting lover for Diana Paget, he was still less a fitting lover for Charlotte Halliday. He knew that although it might suit Mr. Sheldon's purpose to make use of

the Captain and himself as handy instruments for the accomplishment of somewhat dirty work, he would be the very last man to accept one of those useful instruments as a husband for his step-daughter. He knew all this; and knew that, apart from all worldly considerations, there was an impassable gulf between himself and Charlotte. What could there be in common between the unprincipled companion of Horatio Paget and this innocent girl, whose darkest sin had been a neglected lesson or an ill-written exercise? If he could have given her a home and a position, an untarnished name and respectable associations, he would even yet have been unworthy of her affection, unable to assure her happiness.

"I am a scoundrel and an adventurer," he said to himself in his most contemptuous spirit. "If some benevolent fairy were to give me the brightest home that was ever created for man, and Charlotte for my wife, I daresay I should grow tired of my happiness in a week or two, and go out some night to look for a place where I could play billiards and drink beer. Is there any woman upon this earth who could render my existence supportable *without* billiards and beer?"

Knowing himself much better than the Grecian philosopher seemed to think it possible for human nature to know itself, Mr. Hawkehurst decided that it was his bounden duty, both for his own sake and that of the young lady in question, to keep clear of the house in which Miss Halliday lived, and the avenue in which she was wont to walk. He told himself this a dozen times a day, and yet he made his appearance at the Lawn whenever he had the poorest shadow of an excuse for going there; and it seemed as if the whole business of his life lay at the two ends of Charlotte's favourite avenue, so often did he find himself called upon to perambulate that especial thoroughfare. He knew that he was weak and foolish and dishonourable; he knew that he was sowing the dragon's teeth from which were to spring up armed demons that would rend and tear him. But Charlotte's eyes were unspeakably bright and bewitching, and Charlotte's voice was very sweet and tender. A thrilling consciousness that he was not altogether an indifferent person in Charlotte's consideration, had possessed him of late when he found himself in that young lady's society, and a happiness which had hitherto been strange to him gave a new zest to his purposeless life.

He still affected the old indifference of manner, the idle listless tone of a being who has finished with all the joys and sorrows, affections and aspirations of the world in which he lives. But the pretence had of late become a very shallow one. In Charlotte's presence he was eager and interested in spite of himself; childishly eager about the veriest trifles which interested her. Love had taken up the glass of Time; and the days and hours were reckoned by a new standard; every thing in the world had suffered some wondrous change, which Valentine Hawkehurst tried in vain to understand. The very earth upon which

he walked had undergone some mystic process of transformation; the very streets of London were new to him. He had known Kensington-gardens from his boyhood; but not those enchanted avenues of beech and elm in which he walked with Charlotte. In the plainest and most commonplace phraseology, Mr. Hawkehurst had fallen in love. This penniless adventurer, who at eight-and-twenty years of age was steeped to the lips in the worst experiences of a very indifferent world, found himself all at once hanging upon the words and living upon the looks of an ignorant school-girl.

The discovery that he was capable of this tender weakness had an almost overwhelming effect upon Mr. Hawkehurst. He was ashamed of this touch of humanity; this foolish affection which had awakened all that was purest and best in a nature that had been so long abandoned to degrading influences. For some time he fought resolutely against that which he considered his folly; but the training which had made him the master of many a perplexing position had not given him the mastery over his own inclinations; and when he found that Charlotte's society had become the grand necessity of his life, he abandoned himself to his fate without further resistance. He let himself drift with the tide that was so much stronger than himself; and if there were breakers ahead, or fatal rocks lurking invisible beneath the blue waters, he must take his chance. His frail bark must go to pieces when her time came. In the mean while it was so delicious to float upon the summer sea, that a man could afford to forget future possibilities in the way of rocks and quicksands.

Miss Paget had known very few pleasures in the course of her uncared-for youth; but she hitherto had experienced no such anguish as that which she had now to endure in her daily intercourse with Valentine and Charlotte. She underwent her martyrdom bravely, and no prying eye discovered the sufferings which her proud nature supported in silence. "Who takes any heed of my feelings, or cares whether I am glad or sorry?" she thought; "*he* does not."

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMPACT OF GRAY'S INN.

THE sands which ran so swiftly in the glass which that bright young urchin Love had wrested from the hand of grim old Time, ran with an almost equal swiftness in the hour-glasses of lodging-house keepers and tradespeople, and the necessities of every day demanded perpetual exertion on the part of Mr. Hawkehurst, let Charlotte's eyes be never so bright, and Charlotte's society never so dear. For Captain Paget and his protégé there was no such thing as rest; and the ingenious Captain took care that the greater part of the labour should be performed by Valentine, while the lion's share of the spoil was pounced upon by the ready paw of the noble Horatio. Just now he found his pupil un-

usually plastic, unusually careless of his own interests, and ready to serve his master with agreeable blindness.

Since that awkward little affair at Forêtdechêne, that tiresome entanglement about a King of Spades which had put in an appearance at a moment when no such monarch was to be expected, Captain Paget had obtained the means of existence in a manner which was almost respectable, if not altogether honest; for it is not to be supposed that honesty and respectability are by any means synonymous terms. It was only by the exercise of superhuman address that the Captain had extricated himself from that perplexing predicament at the Belgian watering-place; and it may be that the unpleasant experiences of that particular evening were not without a salutary effect upon the adventurer's future plans.

"It was touch-and-go work, Val," he said to his companion; "and if I hadn't carried matters with a high hand, and sprung my position as an officer in the English service upon those French ruffians, I don't know where it would have ended."

"It might have come to a metallic ornamentation of the ankle, and some amiable 444, who has murdered his grandmother with a red-hot poker and extenuating circumstances, for your companion," murmured Valentine. "I wouldn't try it on with that supererogatory king again on this side of the Channel, if I were you."

The Captain bestowed a freezing look on his flippant protégé, and then commenced a very grave discussion of future ways and means, which ended in an immediate departure for Paris, where the two men entered upon an unpretentious career in the commercial line as agents and travellers for the patentees of an improved kind of gutta percha, which material was supposed to be applicable to every imaginable purpose, from the sole of an infant's boot to the roof of a cathedral. There are times when genius must stoop to pick up its daily pittance; and for twelve months the elegant Horatio Paget was content to devote his best energies to the perpetual praise of the Incorrodible and Indestructible and Incombustible India-rubber, in consideration of a very modest percentage on his commercial transactions in that material. To exert the persuasive eloquence of a Burke or a Thurlow in order to induce a man to roof his new warehouses with a fabric which you are aware will be torn into ribbons by the first run of stormy weather, for the sake of obtaining two-and-a-half per cent on his investment, may not be in accordance with the honourable notions of a Bayard, and yet in a commercial sense may be strictly correct. It was only when Captain Paget had made a comfortable little purse out of his percentage upon the Incorrodible and Incombustible that he discovered the extreme degradation of his position as agent and traveller. He determined on returning to the land of his birth. Joint-stock companies were beginning to multiply in the commercial world at this period; and wherever there are many schemes for the investment of

public capital, there is room for such a man as Horatio Paget; a man who, with the aid of a hired brougham, can inspire confidence in the breast of the least daring speculator.

The Captain came, accompanied as usual by that plastic tool and subaltern, Valentine Hawkehurst, who, being afflicted with a chronic weariness of every thing in life, was always eager to abandon any present pursuit in favour of the vaguest contingency, and to shake off the dust of any given locality from his vagabond feet. Captain Paget and his protégé came to London, where a fortunate combination of circumstances threw them in the way of Mr. Sheldon.

The alliance which arose between that gentleman and the Captain opened a fair prospect for the latter. Mr. Sheldon was interested in the formation of a certain joint-stock company, but had his own reasons for not wishing to be identified with it. A stalking-horse is by no means a difficult kind of animal to procure in the cattle-fairs of London; but a stalking-horse whose paces are sufficiently showy and imposing—a high-stepper, of thoroughbred appearance, and a mouth sensitively alive to the lightest touch of the curb, easy to ride or drive, warranted neither a kicker nor a bolter—is a quadruped of rare excellence not to be met with every day. Just such a stalking-horse was Captain Paget; and Mr. Sheldon lost no time in putting him into action. It is scarcely necessary to say that the stockbroker trusted his new acquaintance only so far as it was absolutely necessary to trust him; or that the Captain and the stockbroker thoroughly understood each other without affecting to do so. For Horatio Paget the sun of prosperity arose in unaccustomed splendour. He was able to pay for his lodgings, and was an eminently respectable person in the eyes of his landlord. He enjoyed the daily use of a neatly-appointed brougham, in which only the most practised eye could discover the taint of the livery stable. He dined sumptuously at fashionable restaurants, and wore the freshest of lavender gloves, the most delicate of waxen heath-blossoms or creamy-tinted exotics in the button-hole of his faultless coat.

While the chief flourished, the subaltern was comparatively idle. The patrician appearance and manners of the Captain were a perennial source of profit to that gentleman; but Valentine Hawkehurst had not a patrician appearance; and the work which Mr. Sheldon found for him was of a more uncertain and less profitable character than that which fell to the share of the elegant Horatio. But Valentine was content. He shared the Captain's lodging, though he did not partake of the Captain's dinners or ride in the smart little brougham. He had a roof to shelter him, and was rarely unprovided with the price of some kind of dinner; and as this was the highest order of prosperity he had ever known, he was content. He was more than content; for the first time in his existence he knew what it was to be happy. A purer joy than life had ever held for

im until now made him careless whether his dinner cost eighteen pence or eighteen shillings; whether he rode in the most perfect of roughams or walked in the mud. He took no heed for the future; he forgot the past, and abandoned himself heart and soul to the new delights of the present.

Never had Philip Sheldon found so willing a tool, so cheap a drudge. Valentine was ready to do any thing or every thing for Charlotte's stepfather, since his relations with that gentleman enabled him to spend so much of his life with Charlotte.

But even in this sublimated state of mind Mr. Hawkehurst was not exempt from the great necessity of Mr. Skimpole and humanity at large. He wanted pounds. His garments were shabby, and he desired new and elegant raiment in which to appear to advantage before the eyes of the woman he loved. It had been his privilege on several occasions to escort Mrs. Sheldon and the two younger ladies to a theatre; and even this privilege had cost him money. He wanted pounds to expend upon those new books and music which served so often as the excuse for a visit to the Lawn. He wanted pounds for very trivial purposes; but he wanted them desperately. A lover without pounds is the most helpless and contemptible of mankind; he is a knight errant without his armour, a troubadour without his lute.

In his dilemma Mr. Hawkehurst resorted to that simple method which civilisation has devised for the relief of pecuniary difficulties of a temporary nature. He had met George Sheldon several times at the Lawn, and had become tolerably intimate with that gentleman, whom he now knew to be "the Sheldon of Gray's-inn," and the ally and agent of certain bill-discounters. To George he went one morning; and after requesting that Captain Paget should know nothing of his application, explained his requirements. It was a very small sum which he asked for, modestly conscious that the security he had to offer was of the weakest. He only wanted thirty pounds, and was willing to give a bill at two months for five-and-thirty.

There was a good deal of hesitation on the part of the lawyer; but Valentine had expected to meet with some difficulty, and was not altogether unprepared for a point-blank refusal. He was agreeably surprised when George Sheldon told him he would manage "that little matter; only the bill must be for forty." But in proof of the liberal spirit in which Mr. Hawkehurst was to be treated, the friendly lawyer informed him that the two months should be extended to three.

Valentine did not stop to consider that by this friendly process he was to pay at the rate of something over a hundred and thirty per cent per annum for the use of the money he wanted. He knew that this was his only chance of getting money; so he shut his eyes to the expensive nature of the transaction, and thanked Mr. Sheldon for the accommodation granted to him.

"And now we've settled that little business, I should like to have a few minutes' private chat with you," said George, "on the understanding that what passes between you and me is strictly confidential."

"Of course!"

"You seem to have been leading rather an idle life for the last few months; and it strikes me, Mr. Hawkehurst, you're too clever a fellow to care about that sort of thing."

"Well, I have been in some measure wasting my sweetness on the desert air," Valentine answered carelessly. "The governor seems to have slipped into a good berth by your brother's agency; but I am not Horatio Nugent Cromie Paget, and the brougham and lavender kids of the Promoter are not for me."

"There is money to be picked up by better dodges than promoting," replied the attorney ambiguously; "but I suppose you wouldn't care for any thing that didn't bring immediate cash? You wouldn't care to speculate the chances, however well the business might promise?"

"*C'est selon!* That's as may be," answered Valentine coolly. "You see those affairs that promise so much are apt to fail when it comes to a question of performance. I'm not a capitalist; I can't afford to become a speculator. I've been living from hand to mouth lately by means of occasional contributions to a sporting weekly, and a little bit of business which your brother threw in my way. I've been able to be tolerably useful to him, and he promises to get me something in the way of a clerkship, foreign correspondence, and that kind of thing."

"Humph!" muttered George Sheldon; "that means eighty pounds a year and fourteen hours' work a day, letters that must be answered by this mail, and so on. I don't think that kind of drudgery would ever suit you, Hawkehurst. You've not served the right apprenticeship for that sort of thing; you ought to try for some higher game. What should you say to an affair that might put two or three thousand pounds in your pocket if it was successful?"

"I should feel very much inclined to fancy it a bubble; one of those dazzling rainbow-tinted globes which look so bright dancing about in the sunshine, and explode into nothing directly they encounter any tangible substance. However, my dear Sheldon, if you really have any employment to offer to a versatile young man who is not overburdened with vulgar prejudices, you'd better put the business in plain words."

"I will," answered George; "but it's not an affair that can be discussed in five minutes. It's rather a serious matter, and involves a good deal of consideration. I know that you're a man of the world, and a very clever fellow into the bargain; but there's something more than that wanted for this business, and that is patience. The hare is a very fine animal in her way, you know; but a man must have a little of the tortoise in him if he wants to achieve any thing out of the common run in the way of good luck. I have been working, and waiting, and speculating the chances for the last fifteen years, and I think I've

got a good chance at last. But there's a good deal of work to be done before the business is finished; and I find that I must have some one to help me."

"What sort of business is it?"

"The search for the heir-at-law of a man who has died intestate within the last ten years."

The two men looked at each other at this juncture; and Valentine Hawkehurst smiled significantly.

"Within the last ten years?" he said. "That's rather a wide margin."

"Do you think you would be a good hand at hunting up the missing links in the chain of a family history?" asked Mr. Sheldon. "It's rather tiresome work, you know, and requires no common amount of patience and perseverance."

"I can persevere," said Valentine decisively, "if you can show me that it will be worth my while to do so. You want an heir-at-law, and I'm to look for him. What am I to get while I'm looking for him? and what is to be my reward if I find him?"

"I'll give you a pound a week and your travelling expenses while you're employed in the search; and I'll give you three thousand pounds on the day the heir gets his rights."

"Humph!" muttered Mr. Hawkehurst rather doubtfully; "three thousand pounds is a very respectable haul. But then, you see, I may fail to discover the heir; and even if I do find him the chances are ten to one that the business would be thrown into Chancery at the last moment; in which case I might wait till doomsday for the reward of my labours."

George Sheldon shrugged his shoulders impatiently. He had expected this penniless adventurer to catch eagerly at the chance he offered.

"Three thousand pounds are not to be picked up in the streets," he said. "If you don't care to work with me, I can find plenty of clever fellows in London who'll jump at the business."

"And you want me to begin work—?"

"Immediately."

"And how am I to pay forty pounds in three months out of a pound a week?"

"Never mind the bill," said Mr. Sheldon, with lofty generosity. "If you work heart and soul for me, I'll square that little matter for you; I'll get it renewed for another three months."

"In that case I'm your man. I don't mind a little hard work just now, and I can live upon a pound a week where another man would starve. So now for my instructions."

There was a brief pause, during which the lawyer refreshed himself by walking up and down his office two or three times with his hands in his pockets. After which relief he seated himself before

his desk, took out a sheet of foolscap, and selected a pen from the inkstand.

"It's just as well to put things in a thoroughly business-like manner," he said presently. "I suppose you'd have no objection to signing a memorandum of agreement—nothing that would be of any use in a court of law, you know, but a simple understanding between man and man, for our own satisfaction, as a safeguard against all possibility of misunderstanding in the future. I've every reason to consider you the most honourable of men, you know; but honourable men turn round upon each other sometimes. You might ask me for something more than three thou'—if you succeeded in your search."

"Precisely; or I might make terms with the heir-at-law, and throw you over. Perhaps that was your idea."

"Not exactly. The first half of the chain is in my hands, and the second half will be worth nothing without it. But to prevent all unpleasantness we may as well put our intentions upon record."

"I've not the least objection," replied Valentine with supreme indifference. "Draw up whatever memorandum you please, and I'll sign it. If you don't mind smoke, I should like to console myself with a cigar while you draw the bond."

The question was a polite formula, the atmosphere of George Sheldon's office being redolent of stale tobacco.

"Smoke away," said the lawyer; "and if you can drink brandy and soda at this time of day, you'll find the *de quoi* in that cupboard. Make yourself at home."

Mr. Hawkehurst declined the brandy and soda, and regaled himself only with a cigar, which he took from his own case. He sat in one of the second-floor windows smoking, and looking dreamily into the gardens, while George Sheldon drew up the agreement. He was thinking that any hazard which took him away from London and Charlotte Halliday might be a fortunate one.

The lawyer finished his document, which he read aloud for the benefit of the gentleman who was to sign it. The agreement was in the following terms:

"Memorandum of agreement between George Sheldon on the one part, and Valentine Hawkehurst on the other part, whereby it is this day mutually agreed by and between the parties hereto as follows:

"1. That, in consideration of a weekly salary of one pound while in pursuit of certain inquiries, and of the sum of three thousand pounds to be paid upon the arising of a certain event, namely, the establishment of an heir-at-law to the estates of the late John Haygarth, the said Valentine Hawkehurst shall act as agent for the said George Sheldon, and shall not at any time during the continuance of this agreement do any act to prejudice the inquiry or the steps now being taken by the said George Sheldon to discover and establish an heir-at-law to the estates of the late John Haygarth.

"2. That at no time hereafter shall the said Valentine Hawkehurst be entitled to a larger recompense than is hereinbefore provided: nor shall he be liable to the said George Sheldon for the return of any moneys which the said George Sheldon may advance on account of the said inquiries in the event of the same not resulting in the establishment of an heir to the estates of the late John Haygarth.

"3. That the said Valentine Hawkehurst shall not alter his character of agent to the said George Sheldon during the prosecution of the said inquiry: that he shall deliver over to the said George Sheldon all documents and other forms of evidence that may arise from his, the said Valentine Hawkehurst's, inquiries: and that he shall week by week, and every week, and as often as may be necessary, report to the said George Sheldon the result of such inquiries, and that he shall not on any pretence whatever be at liberty to withhold such fruits of his researches, nor discover the same to any one else than the said George Sheldon, under a penalty of ten thousand pounds, to be recovered as liquidated damages previously agreed between the parties as the measure of damages payable to the said George Sheldon upon the breach of this agreement by the said Valentine Hawkehurst.

"In witness whereof the parties hereto have this 20th day of September 1862 set their hands and affixed their seals."

"That sounds stiff enough to hold water in a court of law," said Valentine when George Sheldon had recited the contents of the document.

"I don't suppose it would be much good in Chancery-lane," returned the lawyer carelessly; "though I daresay it sounds rather formidable to you. When one gets the trick of the legal jargon, it's not easy to draw the simplest form of agreement without a few superfluous words. I may as well call in my clerk to witness our signatures, I suppose."

"Call in any one you like."

The clerk was summoned from a sunless and airless den at the back of his principal's office. The two men appended their signatures to the document; the clerk added his in witness of the genuine nature of those signatures. It was an affair of two minutes. The clerk was dismissed. Mr. Sheldon blotted and folded the memorandum, and laid it aside in one of the drawers of his desk.

"Come," he said cheerily, "that's a business-like beginning at any rate. And now you'd better have some brandy and soda, for what I've got to say will take some time in the saying of it."

On this occasion Mr. Hawkehurst accepted the lawyer's hospitality, and there was some little delay before the conversation proceeded.

It was a very long conversation. Mr. Sheldon produced a bundle of papers, and exhibited some of them to his agent, beginning with that advertisement in the *Times* which had first attracted his notice, but taking very good care *not* to show his coadjutor the obituary in

the *Observer* wherein the amount of the intestate's fortune was stated. The ready wits which had been sharpened at so many different grindstones proved keen enough for the occasion. Valentine Hawkehurst had had little to do with genealogies or baptismal registers during his past career; but his experiences were of such a manifold nature, that he was not easily to be baffled or mystified by any new experience. He showed himself almost as quick at tracing up the intricacies of a family tree as Mr. Sheldon, the astute attorney and practised genealogist.

"I have traced these Haygarths back to the intestate's great-grandfather, who was a carpenter and a Puritan in the reign of Charles the First. He seems to have made money—how, I have not been able to discover with any certainty; but it is more than probable he served in the civil wars, and came in for some of the plunder those crop-eared, psalm-singing, Pierce-the-brain-of-the-tyrant-with-the-nail-of-Jael scoundrels were always in the way of, at the sack of Royalist mansions. The man made money; and his son, the grandfather of the intestate, was a wealthy citizen in the reigns of Anne and the first George. He was a grocer, and lived in the market-place of Ullerton in Leicestershire; an out-of-the-way sleepy place it is now, but was prosperous enough in those days, I daresay. This man (the grandfather) began the world well-off, and amassed a large fortune before he had done with it. The lucky beggar lived in the days when free-trade and competition were unknown, when tea was something like sixty shillings a pound, and when a psalm-singing sleek-haired fellow with a reputation for wealth and honesty might cheat his customers to his heart's content. He had one son, Matthew, who seems, from what I can gather, to have been a wild sort of fellow in the early part of his career, and not to have been at any time on the best possible terms with the sanctimonious dad. This Matthew married at fifty-three years of age, and died a year after his marriage, leaving one son, who afterwards became the reverend intestate, with whom, according to the evidence at present before me, ends the direct line of the Haygarths." The lawyer paused, turned over two or three papers, and then resumed his explanation. "The sanctimonious grocer, Jonathan Haygarth, had one other child besides the son—a daughter called Ruth, who married a certain Peter Judson, and became the mother of a string of sons and daughters; and it is amongst the descendants of these Judsons that we may have to look for our heir-at-law, unless we find him nearer home. Now, my idea is, that we *shall* find him nearer home."

"What reason have you for forming that idea?" asked Valentine.

"I'll tell you. This Matthew Haygarth is known to have been a wild fellow. I obtained a good deal of fragmentary information about him from an old man in some almshouses at Ullerton, whose grandfather was a schoolfellow of Matthew's. He was a scapegrace, and was always spending money in London while the respectable

psalm-singer was hoarding it in Ullerton. There used to be desperate quarrels between the two men, and towards the end of Jonathan Haygarth's life the old man made half a dozen different wills in favour of half a dozen different people, and cutting off scapegrace Matthew with a shilling. Fortunately for scapegrace Matthew, the old man had a habit of quarrelling with his dearest friends,—a fashion not quite exploded in this enlightened nineteenth century,—and the wills were burnt one after another, until the worthy Jonathan became as helpless and foolish as his great contemporary and namesake, the Dean of St. Patrick's; and after having died "first at top," did his son the favour to die altogether, *intestate*, whereby the roysterer and spendthrift of Soho and Covent-garden came into a very handsome fortune. The old man died in 1766, aged eighty; a very fine specimen of your good old English tradesman of the Puritanical school. The roysterer, Matthew, was by this time forty-six years of age, and, I suppose, had grown tired of roystering. In any case he appears to have settled down very quietly in the old family house in the Ullerton market-place, where he married a respectable damsel of the Puritan school, some seven years after, and in which house or in the neighbourhood whereof, he departed this life, with awful suddenness, one year after his marriage, leaving his son and heir, the reverend *intestate*. And now, my dear Hawkehurst, you're a sharp fellow, and I daresay a good hand at guessing social conundrums; so perhaps you begin to see my idea."

"I can't say I do."

"My notion is, that Matthew Haygarth may possibly have married before he was fifty-three years of age. Men of his stamp don't often live to that ripe age without being caught in matrimonial toils somehow or other. It was in the days of Fleet marriages, in the days when young men about town were even more reckless and more likely to become the prey of feminine deception than they are now. The fact that Matthew Haygarth revealed no such marriage is no conclusive evidence against my hypothesis. He died very suddenly—*intestate*, as it seems the habit of these Haygarths to die; and he had never made any adjustment of his affairs. According to the oldest inhabitant in Ullerton almshouses, this Matthew was a very handsome fellow, generous-hearted, open-handed; a devil-may-care kind of a chap; the type of the rollicking heroes in old comedies; the very man to fall over head and ears in love before he was twenty, and to go through fire and water for the sake of the woman he loved. In short, the very last man upon earth to live a bachelor until his fifty-fourth year."

"He may—"

"He may have been a profligate, you were going to say, and have had baser ties than those of Church and State. So he may; but if he was a scoundrel, tradition flatters him. Of course all the information one can gather about a man who died in 1774 must needs be of a very

uncertain and fragmentary character. But if I can trust the rather hazy recollections of my oldest inhabitant about what his father told him *his* father had said of wild Mat Haygarth, the young man's wildness was very free from vice. There is no legend of innocence betrayed or infamy fostered by Matthew Haygarth. He appears to have enjoyed what the young men of that day called life—attended cock-fights, beat the watch, gambled a little, and was intimately acquainted with the interior of the Fleet and Marshalsea prisons. For nearly twenty years he seems to have lived in London; and during all those years he was lost sight of by the Ullerton people. My oldest inhabitant's grandfather was clerk to a merchant in the city of London, and had therefore some opportunity of knowing his old schoolfellow's proceedings in the metropolis. But the two townsmen don't seem to have seen much of each other in the big city. Their meetings were rare, and, so far as I can make out, for the most part accidental. But, as I said before, my oldest inhabitant is somewhat hazy, and excruciatingly prolix; his chaff is in the proportion of some fifty to one of his wheat. I've given a good deal of time to this case already, you see, Mr. Hawkehurst; and you'll find *your* work very smooth sailing, compared to what I've gone through."

"I daresay that sort of investigation is rather tiresome in the earlier stages."

"You'd say so, with a vengeance, if you had to do it," answered George Sheldon almost savagely. "You start with the obituary of some old bloke who was so disgustingly old when he consented to die that there is no one living who can tell you when he was born, or who were his father and mother; for, of course, the old idiot takes care not to leave a blessed document of any kind which can aid a fellow in his researches. And when you've had the trouble of hunting up half-a-dozen men of the same name, and have addled your wretched brains in the attempt to patch the half-dozen men—turning up at different periods and in different places—into one man, they all tumble to pieces like a child's puzzle, and you find yourself as far as ever from the man you want. However, *you* won't have to do any of that work," added Mr. Sheldon, who was almost in a passion when he remembered the trouble he had gone through. "The ground has been all laid out for you, by Jove, as smooth as a tea-garden; and if you look sharp, you'll pick up your three thou' before you know where you are."

"I hope I shall," answered Valentine coolly. He was not the sort of person to go into raptures about three thousand pounds, though such a sum must needs have seemed to him the wealth of a small Rothschild. "I know I want money badly enough, and am ready and willing to work for it conscientiously, if I get the chance. But to return to this Matthew Haygarth. Your idea is that there may have been a marriage previous to the one at Ullerton."

"Precisely. Of course there may have been no such previous

marriage; but you see it's on the cards; and since it *is* on the cards, my notion is that we had better hunt up the history of Matthew Haygarth's life in London, and try to find our heir-at-law *there*, before we go in for the Judsons. If you knew how the Judsons have married and multiplied, and lost themselves among herds of other people, you wouldn't care about tracing the ramifications of *their* family tree," said Mr. Sheldon with a weary sigh.

"So be it," exclaimed Mr. Hawkehurst carelessly; "we'll leave the Judsons alone, and go in for Matthew Haygarth."

He spoke with the air of an archæological Hercules, to whom difficulties were nothing. It seemed as if he would have been quite ready to "go in" for some sidereal branch of the Plantagenets, or the female descendants of the Hardi Canute family, if George Sheldon had suggested that the intestate's next of kin was to be found *there*.

"Mat Haygarth, by all means," he said. He was on jolly-good-fellow-ish terms with the dead and gone grocer's son already, and had the tone of a man who had been his friend and boon companion. "Mat Haygarth is our man. But how are we to ferret out his doings in London? A man who was born in 1720 is rather a remote kind of animal."

"The secret of success in these matters is time," answered the lawyer sententiously; "a man must have no end of time; and he must keep his brain clear of all other business. Those two conditions are impossible for me, and that's why I want a coadjutor: now you're a clever young fellow, with no profession, with no particular social ties, as I can make out, and your time is all your own; ergo, you're the very man for this business. The thing is to be done: accept that for a certainty. It's only a question of time. Indeed, when you look at life philosophically, what is there on earth that is *not* a question of time? Give the crossing-sweeper between this and Chancery-lane time enough, and he might develop into a Rothschild. He might want nine hundred years or so to do it in; but there's no doubt he could do it, if you gave him time."

Mr. Sheldon was becoming expansive under the influence of the brandy-and-soda; for even that mild beverage is not without its effect on the intellectual man.

"As to this Haygarth case," he resumed, after the consumption of a little more soda and a little more brandy, "it's a sure success, if we work it properly; and you know three thou' is not to be despised," added George persuasively, "even if a fellow has to wait some time for it."

"Certainly not. And the bulk of the Haygarthian fortune—I suppose that's something rather stiff," returned Valentine, in the same persuasive tone.

"Well, you may suppose it's a decent figure," answered Mr. Sheldon

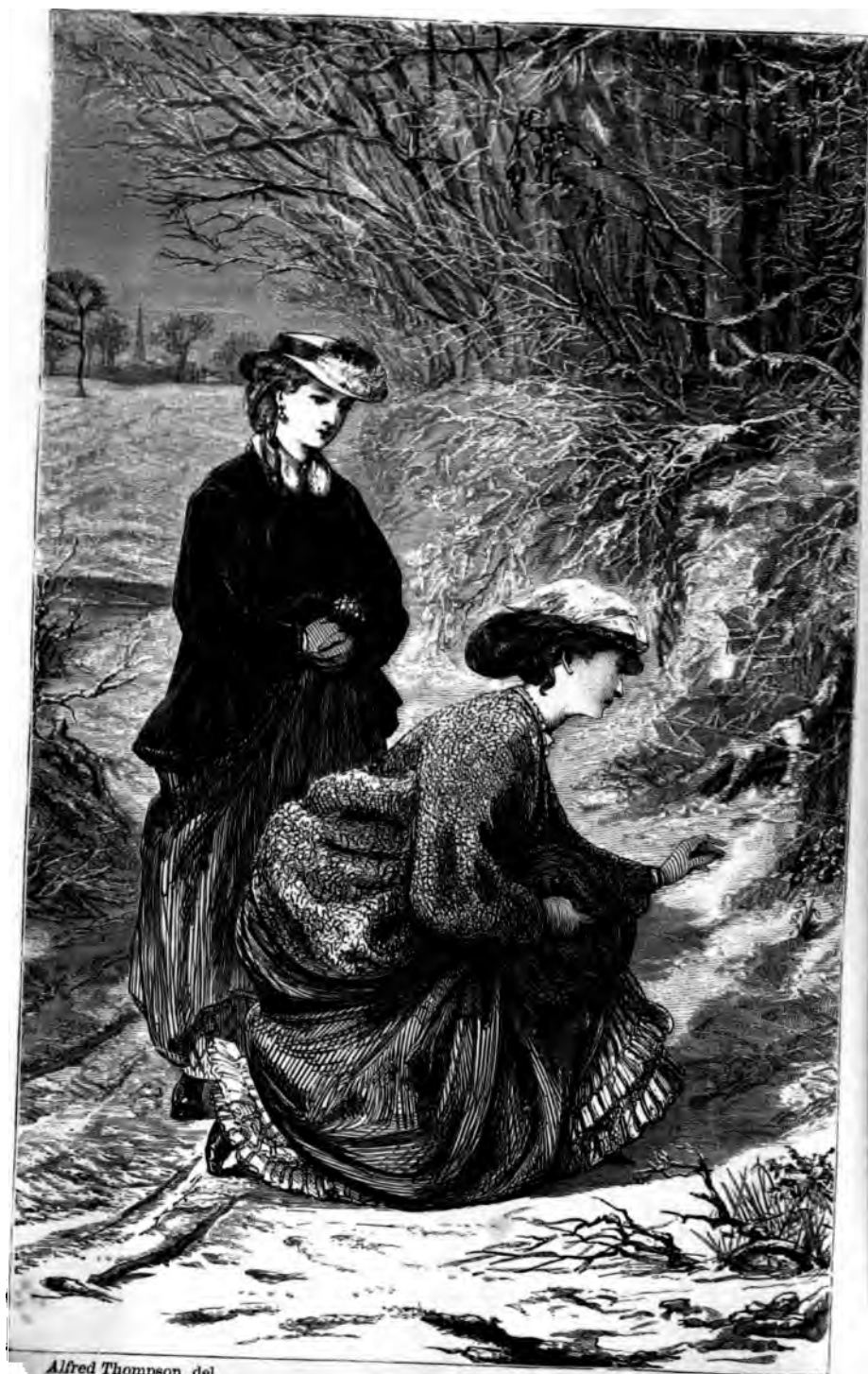
with an air of deprecation, "or how could I afford to give you three thou' out of the share I'm likely to get?"

"No, to be sure. I think I shall take to the work well enough when once I get my hand in; but I shall be very glad of any hint you can give me at starting."

"Well, my advice is this: begin at the beginning; go down to Ullerton; see my oldest inhabitant; I pumped him as dry as I could, but I couldn't give myself enough time for thoroughly exhaustive pumping; one has to waste a small eternity before one gets anything valuable out of those hazy old fellows. Follow up this Matthew from his birth; see the place where he was born; ferret out every detail of his life, so far as it is to be ferreted; trace his way step by step to London, and when you get him there, stick to him like a leech. Don't let him slip through your fingers for a day; hunt him from lodging to lodging, from tavern to tavern, into jail and out of jail—tantivy, yoicks, hark-forward! I know it's deuced hard work; but a man must work uncommonly hard in these days before he picks up three thou'. In a few words, the game is all before you; so go in and win," concluded George Sheldon, as he poured the last amber drops from the slim smoke-coloured bottle, and swallowed his glass of brandy undiluted by soda.



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Alfred Thompson, del.

W. L. Thomas, sc.

FEBRUARY—GATHERING SNOWDROPS.

LYRICS OF THE MONTHS

FEBRUARY

Gathering Snowdrops

Now past away is wintry night,
Comes back again the sunshine bright,
The golden flow of ruddy light—

 And birds are on the wing ;
The breaking buds are growing red,
And purple turns the violet bed,
The yellow primrose shows its head
 In bright and early spring.

Keen is the air, the ponds still freeze,
The tangled branches on the trees
Still bare to shudder 'neath the breeze,

 Though merry mortals sing ;
Whilst foremost in the floral race
The modest snowdrop shows its face,
And purely, sweetly takes its place
 As first-born child of spring.

Then bright-eyed maidens, young and fair,
The snowy blossoms cull with care,
To twine them in their jetty hair,

 Whilst merry voices ring:
For what think they of care or grief,
Of winter's chill or autumn's leaf,
That life is sometimes sad and brief?—
 With them 'tis ever spring !

Though seasons quickly come and go,
Great joys are theirs, few cares they know ;
And heed not—it were better so—

 What summer days may bring.
Laugh on, fair girls ! and often stay
To pluck sweet blossoms on your way,
And gather snowdrops while you may—
 For 'tis not always spring !

J. ASHBY STERRY.

GAVARNI

SOME thirty years ago the studio of Eugène Delacroix was one day invaded by a French artist whose name is unfamiliar to English ears—Louis Marvy. He found the great artist at his easel with a caricature by Gavarni for his model. "You see," said Delacroix, "I am studying design after Gavarni." Years have rolled by, and master and pupil have met on the other side of the dark river which divides this world from the next. In the warm breath of August 1863 the mortal part of the one was laid in the earth, crowned with all the honours that his admiring countrymen could bestow; and at the end of November last year Gavarni was borne also to the tomb, amidst the sorrowing faces of a few personal friends, but without those marks of national gratitude which his abilities so unquestionably merited. Yet it would be difficult to say which was the greater artist, though there can be little question as to which was the better known. Delacroix painted some thirty or forty pictures, all of the highest excellence, but accessible only to the few, and thoroughly appreciated by those only who trouble themselves to look for them. On the other hand, Gavarni, in the course of his long and laborious life, threw off more than sixty thousand drawings, which, published at a cheap rate, were within the reach of everybody who cared to possess them. In this astonishing series is reproduced every imaginable phase of Parisian life. As we turn the pages, the whole comedy and tragedy of human existence passes before us. Idlers, grisettes, students, dandies, beggars, thieves, bourgeois, priests, lorettes, hypocrites, wives good and bad, husbands faithful and false, children *naifs*, impudent, and malignant, exhibit themselves in their nature and in their habit as they were, and indeed as they are, since human nature is the same under all conditions of time. Hear what one of the greatest of modern French critics, Jules Janin, has said of these creations: "Gavarni's players are real men. They walk without thinking that they are followed; they pass by unaware that they are looked at; they speak, and not one has the air of imagining himself overheard. They are artlessly foolish, malicious, proud, gluttonous, idle, loungers, scoundrels, cowards, flatterers, takers of oaths, makers of songs, stupid, vain, frivolous, gossipers, treacherous, brutal, or subtle; you see these are no longer comedians—they are men." To have created such a gallery, to have caught the whole tone of the life around him with such entire perfection—surely this is work enough for one man. We may lament that he has left us nothing so laboured and complete as the "Bark of Dante," the "Massacre of Scio," or the "Education of Achilles," upon which, with their like, the fame of Delacroix must rest;

we can only rejoice that he has done the work to which he set himself so well, and that he has left behind him works which bear to art the same relation which those of Balzac do to literature.

Like so many distinguished Frenchmen, from Voltaire downwards, the Lecch of France was known throughout his life by a name which was his own only because he assumed it. His real name was Chevalier, and by it he was known until a signature for his published works became necessary. The few incidents of his life may be very briefly told, but in themselves they are interesting as presenting faithful pictures of the life of an earnest labourer in the field of art. His father was by no means a rich man—Vapereau even calls the family poor—but the adjective must not be taken in too literal a sense. At the beginning of the present century, having amassed a competency sufficient for his own modest needs, he settled down in Paris, where in 1801 his son, Sulpice Paul, was born. There was an artistic drop in his veins on his mother's side. Her brother was a painter named Thiemet, who in the time of the revolution gained some little temporary success. At first this undeveloped power took a direction which scarcely promised to lead its possessor into the path in which he was destined afterwards to gain so much renown. A trade was necessary; and as the young Sulpice Paul was passionately fond of the exact sciences, his father apprenticed him to a mechanical draughtsman. By day he worked with rule and compass in his workshop; by night—thanks to that liberal encouragement of the arts which has always been characteristic of the French Government—he followed the course laid down by the School of Design. He was in his seventeenth year when the general survey of France opened a place for him. The officers appointed to make the survey placed him at Tarbes, and there, in the midst of a picturesque country, and surrounded by people whose every attitude formed the subject of a picture, he gave himself up with little restraint to the indulgence of his artistic tastes. Landscapes and figure subjects in chalk and water-colour flowed from his hand in an incessant stream; but he won no reputation, except amongst the few private friends to whom he submitted his work. At last, incited by some ladies who had shown him particular attention, he sent a couple of drawings of costumes to M. de la Mésangère, who then conducted a sort of magazine of fashion in Paris. These being published were followed by others of the same class, which were so well appreciated by the public, that on his return to the capital the artist was able to resign his connection with the survey, and to live by his pencil. One day, bargaining with Susse the publisher, he was called upon for a signature to his work. For some unknown reason, Chevalier did not choose to reveal himself, and therefore signed his drawings with the name of a valley very dear to him during his stay in the Pyrenees—Gavarni. Henceforward that name became his; so that even in his public capacity he was known by it, rather than by that which of right belonged to him.

His life at this period, though pleasant enough, was not such as to lead very readily to the belief that he would ever attain that position which was afterwards to be his lot. He was chiefly occupied in designing costumes for theatres—a species of work in which he delighted, and in which he certainly gained considerable applause. The costumiers came to him for dresses for the masked balls of the carnival, and he gave them more graceful drawings than they had ever seen before. Until his day, half the men who patronised those entertainments went in the costume of Punch or of Pierrot. To this monotony he put a speedy end, by the invention of that graceful dress known as the “débardeur,” and by fifty other designs quite as pretty, though not perhaps so seductive. Better times were, however, drawing near. M. Emile de Girardin was then making his first appearance in the world of literature—not after the grave and dogmatic fashion in which he now holds his own amongst the journalists, but as editor of a little tailors’ magazine called *La Mode*. To this Gavarni contributed the drawings; thus obtaining an introduction to that world of journalism from which he had hitherto been shut out. A story of doubtful authenticity is told of his connection with this paper. In engaging him to make the drawings for it, M. de Girardin warned the artist that he could only pay him indifferently, but that he hoped to atone for that circumstance by the help which he would give him in other ways. Gavarni replied, that he was too poor to speculate; to which he was answered with a cynical remark about business being “always carried on with other people’s money.” It is said that the artist was so struck with this remark that ten years later he put it under one of his studies of modern life, and that, it having been recognised by M. de Girardin as his own, a coolness sprang up, which ended only with the life of the artist. Be this as it may—and it is at once easier and pleasanter to extend an honest doubt to the story, for the sake alike of Gavarni and Girardin—the association continued. *La Mode* prospered indifferently; and Gavarni supplied it with a drawing or two weekly, which did more to bring it into popularity than the unpractised pen of his colleague. Other papers had also the aid of his pencil; and the theatrical tailors and costumiers found a valuable assistant in him. Weary at last of his first journal, and perhaps weary also of its editor, he went over to its rival, *L’Artiste*, and thence to a third paper, with the unsubstantial title of *La Silhouette*. Two years later, in 1834, he was seized with that mania which so often shows itself amongst the class to which Gavarni belonged, and started a paper of his own. It was called the *Journal des Gens du Monde*, and was chiefly distinguished by the beauty of its exterior. Gavarni was at once editor and illustrator. He gave to it verse and prose; he illustrated both with charming little drawings. Somehow or other, the undertaking was unprofitable. The public were not attracted by the pictures, and obstinately refused to buy the journal, notwithstanding the ribbons with which it was tied up. The editor would have waited

patiently for them to come round, but his creditors would not. A decree of the Tribunal of Commerce interfered; Gavarni was released from his debts; but the *Journal des Gens du Monde* ceased to appear.

At this point the first period of Gavarni's life comes to a close. Hitherto he has been only a designer, and has had no opportunity of proving the genuine and original bent of his genius. All that he has drawn has been purely artistic in character, and shows a trace of feebleness here and there, which cannot be discovered in his later works. While he was hesitating as to his future course he suddenly received an offer from Caboche, the proprietor of the *Charivari*. His terms were liberal, and his treatment generous. All that Gavarni did he accepted; and the result was that he laboured with a success to which he was not yet accustomed. At first his subjects were taken from the outer aspects of Paris life. Series after series flowed from his pencil, all instinct with vivacity and force, but all relating in some way to the younger life of the city. This was the period in which were produced *les Lorettes*, *les Actrices*, *les Coulisses*, *les Fashionables*, *les Gentilshommes bourgeois*, *les Artistes*, *les Etudiants*, *les Débardeurs*, *les Plaisirs champêtres*, *les Bals masqués*, *le Carnaval*, *les Souvenirs du Bal chicard*, *la Vie des jeunes Hommes*, and *les Buliverneries Parisiennes*. At first he left the explanatory text to other hands, who, however, interpreted his meaning but indifferently. Wearied at last with the feebleness of the libretto, he took pen as well as pencil into his hand, and henceforward became responsible for the verbal jests as well as for the drawings. M. Sainte-Beuve relates that in Gavarni's case the drawing always preceded the words, contrary to the usual custom. He was remarkably quick in working; would, it is reported, sometimes turn out eight or ten lithographic sketches in a single evening. The drawings completed, the stones would be ranged side by side, and with a "*Voyons bons hommes, que dites-vous là?*" the artist would hunt out the necessary dialogue. How brilliant those sayings almost always were, lovers of Gavarni need not be told. Some of the best have been collected in the little volume entitled *Masques et Visages*; a short inspection of which will show, that if Gavarni had not been one of the most fertile of caricaturists, he might easily have been one of the most brilliant of fenilleteonists.

The second half of this period of Gavarni's life was marked by a wider and deeper knowledge of the world than the first. His themes were chosen from private rather than from public life, and dealt with subjects of a less practical and external character. *Robert Macaire* was the most successful piece which the theatres of Paris had produced for many years. Piqued by its success, and anxious to share in it, Caboche proposed to Gavarni to make a series of feminine Macaires. The artist modified the views of his publisher; and the result was a series of graceful drawings, in which the weak side of the fair sex was sharply yet not unkindly exposed. This set bore for titles *les Fourberies des Fem-*

mes en matière de sentiment. It was followed by a dozen other series, all of the same class, exhibiting the weak points of every grade of life. Amongst them were the well-known *Enfants terribles*, *Parents terribles*, *la Politique des Femmes*, *les Impressions du Ménage*, and *les petits Malheurs du Bonheur*. Curiously enough, in the midst of all this fecundity we find only one political caricature. This was published in 1830, and was directed against Charles X. In after-life Gavarni was so much ashamed of this drawing that he sought by every means in his power to efface its memory. Every copy that he could get he destroyed; and he showed marked annoyance when it was proposed that he should produce other work of the same class. He was in truth never a caricaturist, but always a painter of manners. His kindest and most appreciative critic, M. Sainte-Beuve, has somewhere said, with a delicacy which will not bear translating, "La caricature est l'outrage au vrai—outrage dans le sens d'outrance." Of this outrage upon truth Gavarni never, except unconsciously, was guilty. Unhappily for us, that unconscious tendency to overdraw beset him whenever he tried his hand upon English life and manners. Thus those who know him by what he did in this country know him only by his worst and feeblest work.

Gavarni's journey to England is the turning-point of his career, and very distinctly marks the close of his second manner. The circumstances of the journey itself are not without interest. He started in 1849 on an excursion to London, intending to stay for a few days. Days became weeks, and the weeks ran on until three years had gone by. His return was as sudden as his arrival; but the man was changed. He had started with high hopes; but he went home saddened and disappointed. The Duc de Montpensier had given him an introduction to the late Prince Consort; and the Queen of the Belgians herself recommended him to the good offices of the Prince's secretary. A letter written in the name of the duke is still in existence, a portion of which runs as follows: "His Royal Highness is informed that Queen Victoria is astonished not to have seen you yet. If you are in haste to put her Majesty in your gallery, it would seem that her Majesty is not less impatient to sit to you." Mr. Mayer, the Prince's secretary, wrote in similar terms; and Count d'Orsay was unceasing in his kindness. Gavarni was received at Windsor; but the impression which he left behind appears to have been but indifferent. The audience was never repeated, but her Majesty did not altogether forget the artist. Years afterwards Duvelleroy received orders for a fan, with an injunction that Gavarni should be asked to make the drawing. It is characteristic of the man that he undertook the task with the greatest unwillingness, and that it was several weeks before he could bring himself to complete it.

Finding the uselessness of court favour, he speedily settled down to work. Engagements were plentiful enough, but unhappily far from being proportionately satisfactory. Gavarni was essentially Parisian,

and as such could see only through Parisian eyes. At home he drew the life which surrounded him. Here he drew the same faces and the same people under the delusion that he was reproducing London life. He lived in various parts of the capital; Bentinck-street, Little Newport-street, and a tavern opposite the London Dock gates, were alternately his places of abode. The few sketches of the "upper ten thousand" which he produced were the work of his residence in the first of these places—the multitude of figures in rags and misery were the fruits of the latter abodes. Truth compels one to say that they were never thoroughly satisfactory. His life was too essentially Bohemian, and his field of view too limited, for us to expect better results. The society of the metropolis was scarcely open to him, and he made no attempt to penetrate further than the outside. He had, as his sketches as this time prove, no sympathy with London life. The English subjects which he sent to Paris were as wildly false as the common notion of the untravelled Englishman with regard to Frenchmen. His work for the English public was no more successful. In conjunction with Albert Smith he undertook a series of sketches with the title of "Gavarni in London;" but they failed utterly. Their failure, as well as the weakness of much of his other work, is probably due to the commencement of the craze which beset him during the later half of his life. Before he came to England he had begun to despise his art. "Ces bêtises-là" was the phrase he used to describe the works by which he had made his fame. For a long time he thought himself a neglected mechanical genius, and while in London he always sought the society of those who would humour this idea in preference to that of artists. Caring so little for his art, it can be no matter for surprise that he should have failed to take that position to which his genius unquestionably entitled him, or that he should have been at last compelled by poverty to return to Paris. Of his own accord he certainly would not have gone. His friends say that he "left his gaiety in England." This may or may not have been the case; but if it were, the fault is rather with the load of debt under which he struggled than with us. Gavarni, thorough Frenchman though he was, liked the everyday life of this country, liked the people, and was very gradually beginning to understand them when he left. In his later years there was something of the Briton about him. M. Jules Claretie speaks of this British element of his character as "a drop of gin in a glass of champagne."

With his return to his native city Gavarni's third and last period commenced. He had passed his fiftieth year, and the old vivacity and versatility had by this time died out. He continued the practice of his art, but his inclinations leaned more and more towards mechanical pursuits. A new generation of caricaturists had moreover sprung up, and though Gavarni continued to draw for *Charivari*, his sketches lost their popularity. The subscribers even began to complain that he was too

decent—they wanted something with more suggestiveness. Vice and impurity were, however, matters to which he could never lend himself. He satirised them mercilessly, but he never degraded either himself or his art by pandering to them. One of the saddest books ever produced, *Les Lorettes vieilles*, was the work of this period. The title explains the subject—there is no necessity in this place for dwelling on the details. His other drawings were not few, and in some of them faint traces of the ancient power may yet be detected. Generally, however, he was sad. He had never worn the cap and bells; now he put on the robe of the preacher, and unsparingly denounced the vice which surrounded him. Formerly he had sometimes condescended to laugh at vice, though he had never laughed with it. Now his tone was sterner, and the loathsome and repulsive side of sin was the subject which chiefly occupied him. There is a certain drawing of Leech's which shows two consumptive daughters of folly standing under an archway in the midst of pouring rain. One asks the other in the intervals of coughing "how long she has been *gay*." It is the saddest story the artist ever told—the profoundest moral he ever drew. It suggests itself inevitably on turning over Gavarni's latest works, as an echo from the mournful string on which he played so long. One can scarcely wonder that his popularity faded, or that in such a case he should have gradually ceased to exercise his art. A few drawings in the *Illustration*, or an occasional sketch in *Charivari*, reminded the public of his existence from time to time. For the rest he remained in retirement in a little house which he had bought at Auteuil. Here he amused himself with planting his garden, while he made mathematics the daily business of his life. The pursuits of early years came back to him—but with a difference. Now the dream of aerial navigation took possession of him, and the possibility of a flying machine occupied him day and night. He engaged in costly experiments, constructed several machines, and it is needless to say failed in all. Other sources of trouble arose. The railway was carried close to his house, and disturbed the tranquillity he had learned so much to love. Then came the death of his son—the son of his old age, to whom he was passionately devoted. One more series of drawings was produced, *Thomas Virelogue*, in which Gavarni put forth all his powers to express the scorn and indignation against the world which devoured him. "The rest is silence." On the morning of Saturday the 24th November last the loungers on the Boulevards chattered over the news of his death; and on the following Saturday he was forgotten by all but a few personal friends.

The time is perhaps scarcely come for estimating the value of Gavarni's work. Its enormous extent and astounding variety are, however, sufficient to prove that by his death the world lost no ordinary man, while its general character shows also that in him France possessed one of the ablest censors of her proverbial laxity of moral tone. In turning over the folios which contain these multitudinous


sketches, it is remarkable how seldom it is possible to laugh. He was indeed no humorist, but a satirist and a censor of morals of equal power and bitterness. His jests in private life were few, and the tone of his conversation often melancholy. "He looks," said some one of him, "like a mute performing his own funeral." Yet he lived gaily, at all events in his earlier days. M. Sainte-Beuve and Jules Janin have both spoken in rapturous terms of the "Attic nights" enjoyed in his apartment in the Rue des Fontaines St. Georges; but they probably refer rather to the liveliness of his guests than to that of their host. "Why do you never laugh?" asked a lady of that day. "Because my trade, madam, is to make others laugh," was Gavarni's reply. If "others" laughed at his drawings, it must have been sometimes a little awkwardly. Vice, cowardice, folly, hypocrisy, such were his subjects. Scorn, contempt, and indignation, all the most bitter and withering of their kind, were the prevailing characteristics of his dealings with them. To weakness and to poverty he was always tender. Some of his single figures and groups are almost terribly pathetic; even his scorn is sometimes mingled with compassion. In the *Lorettes vieilles* the kind heart may constantly be traced beneath the outside of severity, while in the *Gens de Paris* there are dozens of sketches each of which enshrines a most pitiful remembrance. It is, however, by his personal character that his friends will remember him best. To them he was not merely the man of genius, the artist, the censor of morals, and the arbiter of manners: he was more than these. Gentle, faithful, true always to his better nature, he has left behind him a reputation which men far greater in the world's eyes than he can but envy. He died in comparative poverty. Truth to say, aerial navigation is a dream which is apt to swallow up much, and to leave but little result. Poor though he was, and half-forgotten by the outer world of his contemporaries, there are few over whose graves have been shed more sincere tears, or who have left behind them a more tender memory than Sulpice-Paul Chevalier dit Gavarni.



THE PITMAN'S PERILS

THEY are strangely and terribly alike, the calamities at collieries ; alike in their causes and effects ; alike in many of their details ; and they rarely come upon us singly. Although there may be nothing remarkable in this, beyond mere coincidence, it is nevertheless a notable fact that from the earliest times of which we have any record, these catastrophes have occurred in twos. In March 1766, ten men were killed at the Walker colliery in the north, and a week afterwards thirty-nine were destroyed at Fatfield. On December 6th, 1773, several persons were killed at a colliery near the Wear, and two days afterwards twenty-eight lost their lives at Chator's Haugh in the same district. In June 1794, thirty victims were the result of an explosion at Rickleton pit, near Picktree ; and within two days, twenty-eight more were killed at Harraton. In October 1799, thirty-nine men were killed at Lumley, and the bodies of the poor fellows were never recovered. In October 1805, thirty-five men were killed at Hebburn, and in November thirty-eight at Oxclose. On September 28th, 1813, there was an explosion at Hall pit, Fatfield, by which thirty-two persons were killed ; and in December of the same year, twenty-two lost their lives at Felling from a similar accident. On the 2d of June 1815, Success pit, Newbittle, exploded, and fifty-seven people were killed ; and on the 27th, Sheriff Hill pit exploded, causing the destruction of eleven. On October 19th, 1821, another pit at Newbittle exploded, and two persons were killed by the explosion ; and on the 23d, fifty-two were killed by a similar misfortune at Wallsend. We might go on enumerating instances of the kind *ad infinitum*. These we have simply ticked off in an old statistical list relating to the Durham and Newcastle district, and we give them merely by way of illustration.

In each case the accident arose from explosion ; and their close proximity, both as regards locality and time, makes them to a certain extent tell in favour of the theory that there is no mystery about the double misfortunes ; this plurality being accounted for by atmospheric disturbances. In known "fiery" mines the danger of explosion is generally regarded as greater at a time of any remarkable and sudden fall of the barometer. Under these circumstances, what might be a comparatively harmless act of carelessness one day would be fatal the next. Mr. G. V. Vernon of Manchester, who has not stood alone in pointing out the effect produced by sudden changes of atmospheric pressure and temperature upon the formation of gas in coal-mines, is convinced that the solution of this great difficulty of the rapid change in the condi-



tion of the air in mines is only to be reached by an attentive examination of the law of circular storms, or cyclones; the fundamental principles of which are explained in Colonel Sir W. Reid's work, an *Attempt to develop the Law of Storms*. Some rather remarkable instances have been given by a writer in the *Weekly Dispatch* by way of supporting this theory:

"In the early part of February 1857 there was a sudden rise of temperature to the extent of 24 degrees, and a fall of the barometer, both caused by passing cyclones. On the 1st of the month the thermometer stood at 31 degrees; on the 11th it reached 50; on the 18th it touched 55; on the 19th came the terrible explosion at Lundhill, and a loss of 189 lives. Then a sudden fall of 10 degrees followed, succeeded by as sudden a rise to its former height on the 22d and 23d; and on the 23d there was an explosion at Birk-lane Colliery, near Schoales. By the 27th of the month, there was a fall to 47 degrees, and on the following day, the last of February, a jump to 57, and a sudden fall and subsequent reaction, showing a most disturbed state of the atmosphere, till the 4th of March, when an explosion occurred at Shipley, near Derby. In the same year, between the 20th and 25th of May, there was a rapid fall of 15 degrees, and as rapid a recovery; and on the 26th an explosion at Ince Hall, near Wigan."

It is no doubt fair to argue that violent storms producing terrible disasters at sea, frequently occurring almost simultaneously with the active prevalence of fire-damp, are evidence of a kindred cause influencing both; and that meteorological observations at various points, instantly recorded and telegraphed, might therefore announce the approach of a cyclone, and thus serve as a warning to the miner as well as to the seaman. The theory is worthy of a searching scientific investigation; but meanwhile there are ascertained practical means of reducing the present danger to a great extent, which are not carried out, and there is a want of precautionary appliances for assisting the escape of colliers from the mine when great calamities come upon them in the darkness. As an example of the first assertion, the miners at many collieries, even where explosions have taken place, still "blast" the coal. The men at Lundhill have struck since the recent calamities at Barnsley and in Staffordshire for a rate of remuneration that will compensate them for desisting from this dangerous practice. Scores of accidents attest to the fact that many men often lose their lives in cases of flooding, falling-in of earth, and explosions, for want of extra facilities of escape from the mine, which engineering science could readily supply.

When James Everett, a dissenting preacher of high repute, published that quaint little book, *The Wall's-End Miner*, the terrible calamity at Wall's-End colliery in June 1835 was the most disastrous occurrence of the kind on record. One hundred and three men and boys were swept away by the explosion, which shook the whole district

like an earthquake, and covered the high road with a thick coating of coal-dust, which was thrown out of the shaft. Like the recent accidents, this one had its grim companion. "It occurred about two o'clock on Thursday afternoon, at the moment when he (the local preacher) was preparing a sermon for the dreadful accident which took place at Nun's field, only about half-an-hour from the same time the preceding Thursday." Like most other inquiries into coal-pit calamities, the investigation at Wall's Ead resulted in a vague sort of inference as to the origin of the explosion, made up in this case out of a "gas-pipe drift," some repairs, a naked candle, and a careless miner.

The following note in an appendix by Mr. Sykes to evidence given before a committee of the House of Lords, and quoted by this same dissenting preacher, gives us a curious glimpse at the conduct of the press a hundred years ago :

"Explosions and other calamities," he says, "happened as frequently in our collieries formerly as at the present time; but the servility of the local press prevented their being given to the public. The following extract from the *Newcastle Journal* of March 21st, 1767, will prove this assertion: 'As so many deplorable accidents have lately happened in collieries, it certainly claims the attention of coal-owners to make a provision for the distressed widows and fatherless children occasioned by these mines, as the catastrophe from foul air becomes more common than ever: yet as we have been requested to take no particular notice of these things, which in fact could have very little good tendency, we drop the farther mentioning of it; but before we dismiss the subject, as a laudable example for their imitation, we recommend the provision made in the Trinity House for distressed seamen, seamen's widows, &c. which in every respect is praiseworthy, and confers honour on that brotherhood.' From this it is reasonable to conclude, that there must at that time have been a *dreadful sweep of human life* in one or more of the neighbouring collieries; and it is from such injunctions laid upon the newspaper editors, that these occurrences for a great number of years were kept as much as possible from the public. It is not many years since coroners' inquests were first held on the bodies of the unfortunate sufferers of these visitations, consequently 'the ready coffin and the churchyard closed the scene.'"

What must have been the miseries and perils of a collier's life in these times before the Davy lamp and a free press! In the present day scientific and practical men, who know what they are talking about, will tell you that a vast majority of the cases of explosion, flooding, falling-in of headings, breakage of pit-ropes, over-winding, and all the other ills that pitmen are heir to, might be avoided by proper care and strict precautionary supervision of works. The saving of life which would arise from this carefulness and severe inspection is best shown by the numbers of the victims. The deaths from explosions of fire-

damp in Great Britain in ten years, 1856 to 1865, are estimated at 2019. The deaths from falls in the same period numbered 3958; and the total number of deaths from all violent causes in that period were 9916.

Many of the accidents which we mention at the outset of this paper arose from indifference to the Davy lamp, or carelessness in its use: one was the result of obstinacy on the part of a miner who sneered at the lamp and broke it open! In the present day there are pitmen who carry private keys and open their lamps, contrary to regulations. They get more light from the naked candle, and sometimes they open the lamp to light their pipes—smoking at the risk not only of their own but of scores of other lives besides. But this practice would soon be stamped out by severe inspection, and punishment before the magistrates, not by fine only, but by imprisonment. The collier is surrounded with awful perils now, but he is not offered up an indifferent sacrifice to King Coal, as he was in those dark days before the free press, the Davy lamp, and coroners' inquests. Something has been done for him; and the whole nation, with the Queen at its head, sympathises with him in his distress, and succours his widow and orphans. But it cannot be said that efforts towards reducing his risk to a minimum have gone hand in hand with the largely increased and increasing coal workings. It is something like a reflection upon this great scientific, commercial, and philanthropic age, that colliery accidents should be of such frequent occurrence. At the chief seat of the coal trade hardly a day passes without a serious accident of some kind happening in individual cases. There is not a pit village without its recent annals of violent death underground. If coroners and coroners' juries were not so easily satisfied with the ordinary verdict of "accidental death," coal-owners would be more persistent in enforcing proper regulations in the management of their works. One of the most deadly enemies the collier has to contend with is fire-damp, which is promoted by imperfect ventilation. The Davy lamp will at any time indicate the presence in a serious degree of this foul air; and an elaborate indicator has been invented by Mr. Ansell, but its efficacy is, we believe, a matter of considerable doubt at present. Indexes of any kind will be useless things unless the stoppage of works is enforced whenever certain dangerous symptoms present themselves. Unfortunately in many cases the explosion would come almost simultaneously with the warning.

Many improvements have been carried out of late years, and particularly since the passing of the first Inspection Act in 1850; but to the looker-on the practical benefit seems to fall far short of what is required. On December 20, 1851, fifty men were killed by an explosion at Rotherham, and thirteen two days afterwards at Wigan. In May 1852, there was quite an epidemic of colliery accidents,—ten men being killed at Wigan, twenty-two near Shields, sixty-three near Aberdare, and twenty near

Preston. It is ten years ago since that awful calamity at Cymmer, South Wales, which carried off 114 men and boys, and which was preceded, early in the month, by an explosion at Newport, where the fire fiend was content with eleven victims. The flooding of the pits at Clay Cross some years ago was attended with heavy loss of life and property; soon afterwards 189 people were killed at Lundhill. In January 1862, the Hartley calamity carried off 200 men and boys; and true again to the adage that misfortunes never come singly, the next month brought that other catastrophe—the explosion at Gethin—by which fifty miners lost their lives. And now to complete this sad eventful history come the two latest and greatest explosions, the dead numbering little short of 500—as many as have fallen in important European battles before the age of Armstrong guns and breech-loading rifles.

The story of one misfortune of the kind is very much like the stories of all the others—only that the sorrowful features of Barnsley and Talk-o'-the-Hill were heightened by the occurrences coming on the eve of Christmas. On a hazy December morning, hundreds of men and boys went cheerily to their work at the Barnsley pit. If you had been in the district you might have heard them clattering over the rough paving-stones of the little villages with their coffee-tins and their “bits o' dinner-bags.” You might have heard them long before the first streak of daylight appeared in the east. Soon afterwards they would congregate about the dark shaft, and go down into deeper darkness, band after band—never to return to those little ones at home, looking forward to the happy Christmas time; for the festal season carries his winter sunbeams even into the blackest squalor of pit villages. Who that is acquainted with the long familiar rows of cottages has not some experience of the pit-boy “Mummers” and the “Waits”—the glories of St. George and “Whilst shepherds watch”? There are few classes of the community more demonstrative in their celebration of Christmas than the colliers, and in some districts the religious aspect of the time by no means passes away unobserved.

Many of these people who were assembled for work on that December morning may not have seen daylight for weeks together. They had probably worked the day shift—gone down in the early morning and come up again at eventide. Away in dark and cramped headings, in a gloomy unhealthy atmosphere, working in uncomfortable attitudes, by a dim uncertain glimmer from a candle—caged-in lest the fire-demon of the mine should snatch at the tiny light, and explode the foul and insidious gases,—the collier's is truly a bitter lot. You meet him on summer evenings trudging home in the twilight, black and bent, with a bit of coal or firewood on his shoulder, or a few flowers, maybe, begged from some roadside cottage on his way between the pit village and the sometimes distant mines. He has been in the bowels of the earth the whole day, and all he has seen of the sky has

been a glimpse of it, like a spec at the end of a long telescopic tube, down which he descended before daylight. But habit has done everything for him; he is accustomed to the work, and, alas, too heedless of the danger. And so, day after day, he fulfils his mission of toil. Others have learnt to depend on him for support. The smoke goes up from the hearths of hundreds of cottages on the strength of the collier's labours. Wives and mothers and infants are depending on the wages of his toil. He has his home joys, such as they are, like the rest of us. In some cases his cottage is particularly clean and neat, with white blinds, shining chest of drawers, four-post bedstead, polished oak cupboard, radiant tea-tray, and humming clock; for these things represent the chief treasures of a well-furnished collier's home. The little house seems to struggle against the black surroundings, and keeps itself pure, despite the coal-dust and the mud. By the hill-side yonder, or on the plain, the pit-engine sobs and groans and creaks and bumps and thumps all day long; and the coal-tubs come up almost every minute, swelling the mineral stacks, and filling the coal-trucks which you will see days afterwards shunted upon railways in all parts of the kingdom. By and by the time comes for "the gude mon's" return; the kettle sings, and "something hot" hisses and splutters in the oven or before the fire. The stalwart fellow, with his young son, proud of promotion to labour, comes home; and, humble though it be, all the delightful sensations of home, in an English sense, may cluster about this hearth, and thrill the hearts of those poor souls who go to make up the pitman's household.

These are the happiest features of the steady, sober pitman's life. There are others of the army of toilers in the mine who go home to less cheerful firesides, and some prefer the public-house at the corner; but when their labour is done, they are all expected. Somebody is interested in everyone of them. They have fathers, wives, brothers, children, who love them in their rough way, and sweethearts too: humanity is none the less humanity because it has a grimy face. The most lonely amongst the miners, who may not be expected by wife or child, or mother or father, has perhaps his animal pets; for the collier is strongly attached to animals and birds. He frequently keeps rabbits or guinea-pigs, and fancy dogs. The "bull pup" is not so great a favourite now as he was a few years ago. Terriers for "ratting," and hulking-half-bred poaching-looking dogs, are mostly in request. In the northern districts pigeons are particularly common amongst the colliers; and "the carrier" has the chief place in their affections. Great pigeon-racing matches often take place; and at holiday times, which are very rare occasions, large stakes are involved in these events.

A remarkable instance of the ruling passion strong in death was related to us some time since in connection with the decease of a great pigeon-fancier, whose birds had won more races than any in the district. Did we not feel that the story is true in every respect, we

should not risk a charge of profanity by repeating it. The poor collier was dying, and he had received great consolation from the minister. "I'll be sure to gang to heaven, eh, minister?" he said. "Yes, I have no doubt about it, Johnny," said the minister: "you have repented of all your sins, and you have not been a very bad boy." "That's reight; I've done nowt vary bad, and I've repented on it all; and will I be a hangel, minister?" "Yes, Johnny." "And have wings, minister?" continued the collier, raising himself up in bed. "Yes, Johnny; and have wings." "And will ye coom to heaven soom day?" the collier went on. "I hope so, Johnny," said the minister. "And will ye be a hangel and hae wings?" "Yes, please God," said the minister. "Aye, mon, that's grand!" exclaimed Johnny. "I'll fly thee for a sovereign!"

They are all expected, we say, these poor simple-minded and mostly ignorant men; and herein lies the horror of the fatal alarm which sped like wildfire through the pit villages the other day at noon. The thunder of an explosion had been heard; smoke and dust had rushed up the shaft; and in a few minutes crowds of distracted women and children thronged helplessly about the bank. Many of them had heard, by their winter hearths, stories of the fire-damp, some had small experiences of its fatal results; and now they knew that the vague mysterious calamity which had occurred to them in thoughtful moments as a contingency in their lives had come at last. They were expected, we repeat, these men and boys; expected by wives and mothers, and sisters and little ones; expected by those who had known them from childhood; expected by loving widowed mothers; and they would come no more. The fatal gas had been fired, sweeping the toilers in heaps of dead along the lurid ways. They clung together in their agony for a moment, father and son, friend and brother, these rough miners; for they knew their time had come, and by and by those who had expected them can with difficulty identify their burnt and mangled bodies. The "Mummers" who would have donned the ribbons and fought imaginary dragons with wooden swords; the poor fellows who had practised "Whilst shepherds watch," to sing it at the big house on the hill, or in front of the cottage rows, are dead and gone. With the report of that terrible explosion ringing in the afflicted ear, Christmas came in mourning weeds, with solemn tread and slow, and with the tolling of the funeral bell in place of the pleasant chimes of yore.

The accident at Talk-o'-the-Hill, though less fatal in its results, was an awful calamity, and with proper care and forethought both might have been avoided. It is a bold assertion to make, but the facts will bear us out, and Government has certainly not done all that is required at its hands in the inspection and regulation of coal mines. Twenty-seven Davy-lamp keys were found on the dead bodies after this accident in Staffordshire. If coal miners themselves, instead of sacrificing their own interest and that of the owners to the managers of Trade Unions,

were to combine for the purpose of protecting each other from unnecessary dangers, by enforcing amongst themselves a strict observance of regulations with regard to work, and using their influence to promote the proper supervision, ventilation, and regulation of mines by the owners thereof, they would be doing something practical towards insuring their own lives, and promoting the happiness of those dependent upon them for subsistence.

Two months after that startling calamity at Hartley, we stood by a pit bank at Kingswood in Somersetshire, where an accident had occurred, and an old pitman recalled to mind the flooding of an adjacent pit twenty years previously. The story is somewhat dramatic, and it illustrates so well the position of the miner, that we shall be pardoned for repeating it. A party of villagers were dancing in the open air at Kingswood, keeping up the Whit-Monday festival. It was a bright sunny day, and there were many lookers-on both old and young, making up a happy rural picture, notwithstanding the dark background of the coal-pit. Suddenly there was a whisper amongst the people, followed by an awkward pause on the part of several dancers; then all at once the revels ceased, and the revellers regarded each other with looks of consternation. By and by men, women, and children in a state of great excitement were seen running from their cottages to the coal-pit, where they were joined by the Whitsuntide dancers. The water had broken into the "Cassey" pit, and there were eleven men and boys at the bottom, for whom all earthly succour was at an end. Up to this day not one of the poor fellows has since been seen. Their remains still lie amongst the dark flooded workings of the mine, and when some other calamity occurs in the neighbourhood, such as the one at which we were present, old men point to the disused Cassey pit, and tell you of its ghastly burden. We stood at the Potters Wood pit, as we have already said, close by the "Cassey," two months after the Hartley accident, in company with Mr. Lionel Brough, Government Inspector for the district. Several miners were beneath us, blocked up in the débris of a fallen roof. Long before the Hartley accident Mr. Brough had changed the working of this little mine. A new shaft had been opened, and the coal had been worked for some distance in a particular direction. Mr. Brough, finding that there was an old shaft at no very considerable distance, had suggested that the working should be prosecuted so that a communication might eventually be made with the old shaft, whereby, in case of accident to the new shaft, the other would be available for escape. The banksman told us this in Mr. Brough's absence, and said they had been working on this plan long before the Hartley accident occurred. "No mine," Mr. Brough had said, "ought to be worked with only one shaft."

But it required that terrible single-shaft calamity at Hartley to elicit an Act of Parliament for the future regulation of coal-mining in this respect. There was a "staple" or independent roadway in

the Hartley pit, ascending nine-and-twenty fathoms from the low main, at the bottom of the mine into the yard seam ; there was also a staple leading from the high seam to the bank : so that if there had been a staple in existence ascending some fifty or sixty yards, and connecting the yard seam with the high seam, every soul might have been out of the pit, alive and well, within less than an hour after the accident happened in the shaft. What a contrast is this "might have been" to what really occurred ! Who will ever forget the picture of misery and woe on that memorable Tuesday, when hope had all but departed ? Let us glance back at it for a moment. The snow is falling in great white flakes on the new Hartley village. The wind sweeps over the hills and commons, and wails about the homes of the Northumbrian miners. But there is no snow-balling, no boyish rejoicing at the winter downfall, no additional fuel heaped upon the hearth to cheer "dad and the lads" on their return from the pit. Great fires are blazing at the colliery, and the snow flits ghost-like by where the engine has been panting and groaning for months past. This familiar sound has ceased now, and the illuminations are ominous. We have seen these same bonfires before, with men and women moving about in the fitful light, watching wearily and listening to every sound that came from the yawning pit. They are death-beacons, those pit-fires that battle with the surrounding darkness, making night hideous and morning a ghastly reality. The snow falls unheeded on the watchers in the firelight, and the wind only invigorates troops of men who are toiling in and about the shaft, down which 200 miners descended on the previous Thursday, never again to see the day.

It should be borne in mind that the workings of pits extend in some instances almost for miles, beneath fields and villages, and sometimes under the sea, and that an accident may occur in one part which may be unknown for hours to the men labouring in other parts of the mine. When the water broke into the Clay Cross pit, it was long before all the colliers in the different headings knew of it, and men were lost because they had not time to reach the only way of egress. Had there been another shaft, the result could not possibly have been so serious, and the same remark applies to many other mining accidents. When we consider how much England is indebted to coals,—socially, politically, commercially,—it is hard that the miner should even seem to be neglected by the legislature. A host of enactments surround and protect various classes of artisans ; but comparatively few have been framed in the interests of the collier, who toils in the midst of constant dangers, and dies too often at his post ; whilst we who live at home at ease are sitting, unconscious of his woes, by the social hearth made bright and cheery by the very coals which have cost him his life. We punish the collier when we discover any acts of carelessness on his part. Let others be held responsible in a proportionate degree for faulty shafts, loose brattice-work, ill-ventilated ways, and inefficient inspection.

Looking back at the past, and then contemplating the future, we may form some estimate of the lives which may be saved, in time to come, by prompt and strict legislation. About twenty years ago 40,000,000 tons of coals were annually raised in the United Kingdom. At the present time over 70,000,000 are raised, a large proportion of which is shipped for foreign consumption. In the five years, 1856 to 1860, 381,067,047 tons of coals were raised (and 5089 miners were killed in working it). In 1856, 71,787,522 tons were brought to bank at the various pits in Great Britain, and in 1865 this number of tons had increased to the enormous amount of 98,911,169. It is estimated by wise men (with all due deference to Mr. Stuart Mill) that many centuries must elapse before the British coal-field can be exhausted. The supply in Durham and Northumberland alone, at the present rate of raising, will last, it is calculated, upwards of 1500 years. Will some curious statistician be good enough to calculate, on the basis of present losses, how many more men and boys are likely to be killed in getting it? And how many the legislative screw might save?

The acts of heroism which shine out in the sad story of the recent calamities are fresh in the minds of all newspaper readers, and the world is beginning to understand that true heroism is a characteristic of the pitman. His courage in times of danger and distress is only equalled by his tenderness and compassion. It is an injustice to associate the collier with everything that is rude and lawless. Considering how he lives, and that it is often November with him all the year round,—“no sun, no moon, no stars, no sky,”—the wonder is that he retains so much of his humanity. He is often full of character, and quaint beyond description. When he is at all studious, he frequently takes greedily to mathematics, and as a reader inclines to the grand, the mysterious, and the sublime. *Pilgrim's Progress*, works on “Animated Nature,” and sacred poetry, are great favourites with him. We stood at a book-stall not long since in a northern town on “pay-day,” when two Durham pitmen came up to buy books. One of them wanted Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the other Young's *Night Thoughts*. The bookseller told us that he had sold *Couper's Poems* to the latter a fortnight previously. Several of them were “taking in” scientific works published in parts; and they all delighted in a Family Bible, “with plenty of pictures.” Shortly afterwards we were present at an execution in the same town, and all night long pitmen came trooping in from the distant villages, until the dreadful exhibition took place. They behaved decorously on the whole—far better in every respect than a London mob—and went to their homes and their night-toil in the pits, soon after the “thud” of the strangled murderer had thrilled through the crowd, and sickened them to their heart's content. We have to thank the Dissenting ministers of the north (the Hartley calamity showed how much) for a great deal of both the religious and secular education of the miners. The

Established Church has not done her duty by these poor people. A few years ago we lived in a northern parish, where some thirty parishioners had a church and minister all to themselves. The church was liberally endowed, and would hold at least a couple of hundred people. We paid about two shillings in the pound for church-rates. There never were more than twenty or thirty people present at the services; and these could have gone to four or five other churches, all indifferently attended, within a quarter of a mile. At a few miles' distance there were hundreds and thousands of colliers without a church at all. Where the Church does put in an appearance in the colliery districts, she is rarely without large congregations; and the clergyman has only to take a personal interest in the pitman to make him his sympathetic and confiding friend.

Speaking of churches reminds us of the fact that all through the land sermons have been preached and are being preached, and collections made in aid of the sufferers left behind by the dead pitmen who passed away so suddenly, and almost in presence of the great Christian festival. Apart from these subscriptions, there is a long and glorious list of men and women who have given of their wealth to succour the helpless. There will be fitting recognition of their claims everywhere, and in churches and chapels many a prayerful thought has already travelled to those pit villages lying within the valley of the shadow of death; whilst the prayer has gone up to Heaven with a special earnestness that it may please God to succour, help, and comfort all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation; and provide for the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed.



SACKVILLE-STREET, DUBLIN

BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA

You have gibed and jeered enough, man with the unresting pen and the interminable flux of words—a flux that coagulates in the furnace, and helps the bringing forth of no brilliant enamel, no long-lost ruby-tint in the storied glass. Intolerable has been your discourse about a hundred cities; and what has been the result? *Muchas palabras*; “talkee-talkee;” bosh. I use this last term in its strictly Oriental sense, and not with any reference to its modern and debased slang signification in our tongue. Have you told us any thing really definite, tangible, cogitable about the actual and vital aspect, habits, customs, ways of humanity in those streets you profess to have observed, studied, and diagnosed? Psha! In one twelve-shilling volume of *Murray*—nay, in one page of one such volume, we can find more fibrous, vascular, breathing information than you have given us in a hundred pages. Nay; we will meet you on your own ground. Speciously and ostentatiously you disdain all pretensions to the honest status of a teller of facts—naked, sober facts. You are an essayist, forsooth; a moth fluttering round truth’s candle, a born digressor, a *radoteur* by habit and inclination, a lover of the zig-zag and the tortuous, a Shandyite. So, as the wise old man who wrote the *Religio Medici* bids us not look for whales in the Euxine Sea, nor for great matters where they are not to be found, we forbear to sift your bushel of chaff for facts; we will leave your pottle of hay alone, searching not for the *rem acu* which may or not be lurking therein. But how do you stand when we ask you, “Where is your humour, your discreet waggeries, your keen morsels of observation, your bright glinting reflections on the men and things you have seen?” O, miserably incompetent man! Think with awe and horror on that vast funerary roll—it is forty feet long—which Doctor Professor Lepsius has copied from the Papyrus in the Turin gallery. In that enormous psychical panorama shall you see a trembling shade dragged by Justice before the Tribunal of Amentis. Osiris sits as assessor; forty-two judges are with him *in banco*, all ranged, a terrible show. The divinity Tot is clerk of the arraigns. Hold up your hand, you shivering shade; answer, caitiff: What have you done? What has come of all the ink you have spilt, of all the quills of which harmless geese have been robbed for your sake? Out with it, man! Have you done any thing to benefit good letters? Have you taught mankind any one thing they did not know before? Have you been

worth your salt, or the rather, have you ever hung on to the great army of writers and thinkers—a worthless marauder and camp-follower, fit only to be evicted from Xerxes' host, and triced up to the next tree by a Persian provost-marshal? Words, words, words! *Muchas palabras*. Ay, you are glib at those—you would play Parolles in the play well. Never ran a brook or whirled the sails of a mill so fast as your tongue. But where are the *thoughts* those words should encircle? Where is the lining of rich venison to the stony flour-and-water crust of the warden-pie? It was said of Prynne—a garrulous and verbose author, but still one who had bone and muscle in his mind—that his writings were like thick-skinned fruit, all rind. Yours, man, are like the outer envelope of a walnut, from which the nut itself has been eliminated—a woody, bitter covering of mast, fit only to be pickled in the vinegar of criticism.

This is what my *eidolon*, my conscience, said to me; this is what I said to myself when I sat down to write another "Street of the World," and remembered how many I had written. O, futile strivings after excellence! O, never-ending, still beginning attempt upon attempt! Ixion, you are my brother; Sisyphus, you and I have gotten the same term of penal servitude, and we cannot "do that little lot on our heads," as the rogues say at the police-courts. Thus I arraigned myself; thus abashed and shame-stricken did I falter out pleas in answer to the interrogatories by myself to myself propounded. There are many worse mental exercitations than self-examination; only, we men are usually such cowards, that we dare not, for our lives, seize ourselves by the collar, force ourselves into a corner, and then shake the truth out of ourselves as you would a bone from the jaws of an obstinate dog. But anon I cried: "Enough of these beatings of the breast and self-criminatory yelps; enough of these *suspiria de profundis*. Get up and bar the door of despondency, and set about doing something." I remember, once, being cured of what I deemed a long and a grievous illness by hearing the attendant I had thought an attached and devoted nurse murmur in the next room to a friend, "Drat him! he have been a-grunting and a-groaning day after day, like a hog under a harrow." Eftsoons I jumped out of bed; sent that uncivil attendant to the right about, and got well. You shall hear me grunt and groan no more. You will pardon, perhaps, a gentle melancholy, a soft and subdued sadness. I cannot grin to-day, indeed. My horse-collar hangs up on the wall, like the life-belt in your state-room on board a mail steamer. I feel like that soldier in great Alexander's army, who was nicknamed Agelastos by his comrades for the reason that he had only been known to laugh once in the whole course of his life. When did I laugh last? It must have been at the Olympic, under Madame Vestris' management, and when Mr. Liston—or was it Mr. Wrench, or both?—appeared in a *Gentleman in Difficulties*. This is not the season for guffaws. I confess that ere now I have sate

in the chair of the scorner, and eaten meat with him who is supercilious. But that is all gone and past. Behold one whose barb is curbed, and who has given himself up to humility, contrition, meditation, maceration, and other ascetic practices. I am poor; I am sick; I have had losses; I have been cast in damages; I have been fixed as a contributory to a petroleum company (limited); I have failed to "strike ile;" wicked men have despitefully used me, and I am brought very low.

Let me whisper in your ear, O friendly and forbearing reader. Do you know the cause of all this whining and pining? Without further circumlocution I will tell you. As I sit down to write this paper, not precisely in "the worst inn's worst room," but in the indifferently warmed chamber of an hotel in a foreign town seven hundred miles from home, the clock strikes twelve. The last moment of the last Monday of eighteen sixty-six is gone for ever. This is New Year's morning: this is the first of January eighteen hundred and sixty-seven.

Well! and should that suggest sad thoughts? I think so. Ah! it used to be very merry and jovial as, years ago, we came out of the old chambers by Inigo Jones's watergate in Buckingham-street, and, as the last-stroke of midnight chimed, clinked our brimming bumpers, and drank the old year out and the new year in. No more new years can come to half that jovial company. "Poor old Fred's in the Gazette," and the "blithe Carew is hung." The Thames Embankment people may be pulling the very watergate down, now, for aught I know. I have no call to maunder about the "poor old Freds" of the "Ballad of Bouillabaisse," or the "blithe Carews" of "Clapham Academy." Children are born and die every day. It is the condition of humanity. To-day it is your turn; to-morrow it may be mine. Moralising over the deserted board, the thinned branches of the mahogany tree, is but trite platitude after all. Let us concern ourselves with those who remain. *Les morts vont vite*; and joy go with them! But this toasting of the year that is going out and the year that is coming in; this yelling and bursting and health-quaffing and speech-making,—is there any thing more futile? is there any thing more ephemeral? is there any thing more devoid of real substance and meaning? How many times have we joined hands, put one foot on the table—preparatory to putting our whole bodies under it—and screeched out nonsense about "Auld lang syne"! "We twa hae paidied i' the burn"—better to have had a footbath, with some mustard in the water; we have "pu'd the gowans fine"—we had better have taken some pills; and "we'll tak a richt gude willie waucht for auld lang syne"—a basin of water-gruel would be a much more sensible supper. If you would learn the whole sum of the philosophy of conviviality, here you have it from the lips of one than whom no more joyous boon-companion ever trolled a bowl since the days when Shakespeare and Ben Jonson

and Raleigh held wit-combats at the Mermaid. Hear Charles Lamb: "To be an object of compassion to friends, of derision to foes; to be suspected by strangers, and stared at by fools; to be esteemed dull when you cannot be witty; to be applauded for wit when you know that you have been dull; to be called upon for the extemporaneous display of that faculty which no premeditation can give; to be spurred on to efforts which end in contempt; to be set on to provoke mirth, which procures the procurer hatred; to give pleasure, and be repaid with squinting malice; to swallow draughts of life-destroying wine, which are to be distilled into airy breath; to tickle vain auditors; to mortgage miserable morrows for nights of madness; to waste whole seas of time on those who pay it back in little inconsiderable drops of grudging applause,—these are the wages of buffoonery, and death."

Now these, I take it, are noble, breathing, burning words; the solemn truth of which cannot be questioned, although it might be worth while to inquire whether dear kind-hearted Elia would not have softened the acerbity of his remarks a little, had there been such things as soda-water or granulated effervescent bi-carbonate of magnesia in his day. But on this New-year morning I appreciate the force and wisdom of the passage I have italicised to the very utmost. You see that I do not happen to have brought any letters of introduction to any body in this particular foreign town. In a house on the other side of the Schloss-brücke I can see through the brilliantly-lit windows; they are having a grand New-year's party. A Christmas-tree as tall as a drum-major has been redecked with toys and bon-bons for the occasion. I can see the Prussian Jeames gliding through the apartments with a tray full of tumblers of hot punch. Those people on the other side of the bridge are happy. Even in the room immediately over mine the stout old gentleman whom, with his stout old wife, I have marked for so many days at the *table-d'hôte*, is celebrating the anniversary in a merry but peculiar fashion. He took too much Geisenheimer-Rothenburg at dinner, of which the *gnädige Frau*, his wife, did not disdain her share. He had champagne (Heid-seck's) with his sweets, and, I am afraid, took *kirsch-wasser* with his coffee. He has been having something else, I hear, since he came home from the *Schauspiel-Haus*, for there is the noise of a heavy body tumbling about overhead; and the glass-drops in the chandelier are ginging in the most excited manner. Is the old gentleman dancing a New-year's jig with his wife? or is he trying to get into bed, and continually missing his tip? But he too is happy—never doubt it. Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow, I listen to these sounds of revelry, and grimly sit down to make good resolves for the new year. Did you never make such a set of resolutions? You mean to turn over an entirely new leaf. You have done with the frivolous, unprofitable past; you have "sworn off," like Rip Van Winkle. You have sown all your wild oats, and reaped and garnered them in the barn

of remorse. Now is the time for the wise wheat which is to come up so nicely next spring. Yes; you mean to dine on a mutton-chop and a glass of water, and restrict yourself to a cigar and a half three times a week. You will keep an accurate diary and a strict cash-account of your incomings and outgoings. You will pay-up your subscriptions to the coal and blanket fund, and send a five-pound note (anonymously) to Bow-street police-court. You will read Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" and Sir Archibald Alison's "History of Europe," say at the rate of a couple of pages a day. You will rub up your mathematics, and try to learn Hebrew. You will leave off sack, and live cleanly like a gentleman. And how fairly and neatly you transcribe the transactions of January the first 1867 (which I perceive is the festival of the Circumcision) in your bran-new *Lett's Diary!* They should be bound in pie-crust covers, these Lett's diaries, for the promises in them are made but to be broken.

Not unreasonably you might surmise that this article, with Sackville-street Dublin for its theme, was an essay on the new year, and not a street of the world. Pray disabuse yourself of that notion. I have had Dublin in my eye all along. With malice prepense I strove to work myself into that bland, contemplative, melancholy mood for which I entreated your forbearance at the outset. Such a frame of mind is most suitable, I think, to the writer who takes the metropolis of Ireland for his text; for as there are few cities in the world more charming to me than Dublin, so also are there none more melancholy.

More melancholy! tare and 'ouns, what is the spalpeen thinking of? I will be a spalpeen, or an omadhaun, or an Arrah na Pogue, or whatsoever else you may call me; but I respectfully adhere to the position I have laid down. Yes, Dublin is *triste*, and Sackville-street is as sad as the "last rose of summer." Its melancholy is one of degree, and is all its own. Take Sackville-street about five o'clock on a fine summer or autumn afternoon, and the scene it presents is so cheerful and so bustling, that I should not wonder if, knowing what the street is like, you indignantly flung by this sheet, declaring that its writer was blind or doting. Melancholy! Is the Carnival melancholy? Are the Boulevards? Is Regent-street? From Carlisle Bridge to the Nelson Column there stretches a noble thoroughfare, spacious and regular, with a broad foot-pavement and an ample carriage-way. It is lined with noble mansions, many of which may fairly be called palaces. There are great linendrapers' and mercers' shops; great tailors and outfitters; great milliners and dressmakers; sumptuous hotels; stationers' and booksellers' and print shops; and sparkling Palais-Royal-looking *magasins*, where, seduced by the apparent cheapness of the articles, you may ruin yourself in twenty-five minutes in the purchase of not more bog-oak ornaments and Irish point-lace than you can conveniently stow in your waistcoat-pocket. On the macadam there is a constant stream of vehicles. Those outside cars look a trifle rickety,

and would be better, perhaps, for a little washing. So, in the last respect, might be their charioteers; but who looks gayer, livelier, than an Irish car-driver, with his twinkling eyes, his saucy laugh, his ever-ready and witty flow of repartee? There go grand carriages, the best that Long Acre can turn out, with satin-skinned horses, glittering harness, plump coachmen, and austere flunkeys behind. Such coats-of-arms too, as those that blaze, in all the majesty of herald-painting, on the panels! Those are doubtless the equipages of the Irish nobility and gentry. Then there are snug broughams; lovely ladies on horseback—trim, well-mounted grooms following them; officers in undress uniform and officers in mufti caracoling and putting their pretty steeds through their paces; orderly dragoons with leathern pouches slung beside them, trotting with the regimental letters to the General Post-Office. Room for that well-padded, well-braced, and laced and strapped-up, well-dyed and waxed and varnished old gentleman, who comes ambling along on a bright bay, with a couple of moustached dandies well up to his stirrups and assisting him to ogle Dublin beauty on the side-walk. That is the commanding-general with his aides-de-camp, Captain Prance of the Heavies and Captain Dance of the High Fliers. There goes the chief secretary in a tearing mail-phaeton. There is the solicitor-general on a cob. Your imagination may run riot as to the identity of these personages. The commanding-general may be a wealthy distiller, and the solicitor-general a sharp Dublin solicitor who has done very well in the Encumbered Estates Court; but, at least, a little castle-building can do you no harm. I knew a man once who had a season-ticket on the South-Western Railway, Richmond branch, and who for two years and a half was under the impression that he came up to town every morning with his Royal Highness the Duke d'Aumale. How he used to cram the scion of the House of Orleans down our throats! With what stories did he entertain us of the Duke's affability, of his not objecting to smoking, of his relating anecdotes concerning the French opera and ballet! I went down to dine with my friend at Richmond one afternoon, stayed all night, and returning to town with him next morning, recognised in the good-looking gentleman with an accurately-cut beard and moustache who occupied one corner of the carriage, and bade us a cheery *bonjour*, not his Royal Highness the Duke d'Aumale, but a highly respectable French hairdresser from Cranbourn-street, Leicester-square!

General or distiller, solicitor-general or sharp practising attorney, as it may be, the roadway of Sackville-street seems of the liveliest. Turn to the foot-pavement and you will behold even a more exhilarating spectacle. The flags are one parterre of beautiful girls. Were I an American, I should back Broadway New York, from two until five p.m., during the season, and in the space bounded on one side by Canal-street, and on the other by Union-square, for a display of female loveliness not to be equalled in any other street of the world. Indeed the young

ladies of Manhattan are exceedingly pretty; but at prettiness their good looks halt. They rarely, very rarely, rise to beauty, lacking as they do the great essentials of beauty—amplitude, colour, roundness, and suppleness of form. *Elles sont gentilles, mais pas belles.* Sir Joshua's Muscipula is pretty; but Sir Joshua's Nelly O'Brien is beautiful. As a Great Briton, a United Kingdomite, impartially enthusiastic in my admiration of the Rose, Shamrock, and Thistle, I must unhesitatingly—although the decision has not been arrived at without mature consideration—award the palm of peerless beauty to the graces of Sackville-street Dublin. I think you may see there the most beautiful women in the whole world. They seem not only to look better, but to dress better, to walk better than any ladies do elsewhere. The Rose and the Thistle need not be enraged at the preference given to the Shamrock. I was always of opinion that the way in which the Shepherd of Mount Ida finally decided upon his award was by means of a mental toss-up; first the odd goddess out, and then two out of three. I am sure that the rogue thought in his heart that they were all equally beautiful; and if you look at their portraits in P. P. Rubens's picture in the National Gallery, you will admit with me that neither of the defeated candidates had any reason to be cast down.

When you add to a blooming bevy of belles,—fresh and radiant and smiling, disdainful carmine and violet-powder, and who would laugh the cunning sibyl Rachel to scorn were she to whisper them anent “Arabian baths,” or propose to make them “beautiful for ever” (are they not beautiful already?);—when we add to these the prettiest, rosiest, gracefullest children that Pater or Materfamilias could wish to set eyes upon, and the comeliest and most comfortable-looking of matrons, and the tallest and stateliest and most unimpeachably-attired swells—real swells, mind you; no provincial bucks, no pinchbeck dandies, no “one-horse” counts; but swells who are undergoing a splendid exile here in the shape of garrison-duty or staff-appointments at the Castle; swells whose natural habitat is in Rotten Row and Pall Mall;—and when you finish the whole picture with a native population vivacious albeit ragged, luminous although slightly unkempt; the best-natured, the easiest-pleased, the most elastic, the most placable, the kindest-hearted people in Europe,—what is there, an' it so please you, to cause you to usurp the attributes of the melancholy Jaques, and profess to find this merry Forest of Arden sad? But I met a fool in the forest,—a spotted fool,—and he told me there was sadness even in Arden. Jaques was not the only melancholy creature there. The Banished Duke had his cares. Touchstone was not always in fettle. Rosalind, gallivanting about in pantaloons, must have had her moments of despondency. Amiens, I am sure, was a sad dog; for, jovially as he could pipe in “Under the greenwood tree,” who ever discoursed a ditty more exquisitely plaintive than “Blow, blow, thou wintry wind”? They were all in the dumps sometimes, those light-hearted jousting; yea, even to the huntsmen in

their green jerkins and buff boots—an unthinking, pechydermatous race ordinarily. They moped, I have little doubt, and grumbled dolefully when it rained, or the deer were shy, or the beer ran short, or the Banished Duke distributed kicks among them in lieu of halfpence, their monthly stipend.

Belles, and swells, and commanding-generals, and aides-de-camp, and orderly dragoons notwithstanding; carriages, and broughams, and Phoenix-Park hacks, and outside cars all taken for granted; milliners, and mercers, and point-lace, and bog-oak ornaments all credited to the joyous side of the account,—there is something melancholy about Sackville-street. Ay, and cross Carlisle Bridge, and pass through stately Westmoreland-street into College-green. Look up at the noble University, and that glorious architectural creation the Bank of Ireland—the only original building perhaps, save Guarini's Santo Sudario at Turin and the Ducal Palace at Venice, in Europe; all others remind you of something else. Walk your horse up Nassau-street the aristocratic; or turn up Dawson-street by Morrison's Hotel to the lordly Stephen's Green; or push your way through teeming Grafton-street, the Bond-street of Dublin, as Sackville-street is its Regent-street; but every where *avis cura* will jump up behind you, and Melancholy will mark you for her own. Little by little the sadness of the city will come creeping about you like a garment. That glorious Bank of Ireland! As a Temple of Mammon, as a shop for the money-changers, it is desecrated and profaned. It was once the council-chamber of the Lords and Commons of Ireland. They have made the House of Peers into a pay-office; and bills are discounted where once bills were passed. Those hotels and mercers' shops in Sackville and Westmoreland-street were once the mansions of Ireland's nobility. Those enormous houses in Merrion-square and Stephen's Green have become ten times too large for their present occupants. Who inhabits them now, I wonder? Does any body sleep in those immense bed-chambers? Are fires ever lit in those vast kitchens? Are guests ever gathered round the social board in those huge dining-rooms? Alas! I am afraid the dinners have gone as much out of date as Sneyd's claret. The windows look dusty; the doorsteps are full of cracks and fissures; grass grows, and broken glass and crockery remain undisturbed in the areas. The door-plates are tarnished, and there is rust on the wire of the visitors' bell. This faded, bygone, mournful woe is common all over Dublin. Splendid as are the mansions of Sackville-street, they belong evidently to a past age. Shop-fronts have been stuck on to their porticoes; but the sutures don't join; the old and the new do not assimilate. Here and there adventurous tradesmen have gone to vast expense in veneering and gilding and plate-glass; and for cheap clothes and articles of female finery there may be, and should be necessarily, a lively sale; but it is easy to see that substantial, genuine commerce stagnates or has declined. Walk down to the quays, and a comparatively idle river, and a Custom-house

many sizes too big for the business transacted within its walls, meet your view. Ask for the Linen-hall, and you shall be told that it has been turned into a barrack. I have been informed that the trade of Dublin has considerably augmented within these latter years; and Irishmen have shown me, with pardonable pride, their beautiful International Exhibition, as proof positive that their taste, their skill, their energy, had not declined. I saw in the Exhibition an excellent picture-gallery and an exquisite display of statuary. For the rest, I could recognise only a prettily-arranged bazaar, full of gimcrack upholstery and shining trifles, the principal contributors to which were sharp London tradesmen, anxious to puff their wares. To what a sickening extent has this "Industrial" and "International" Exhibition movement been overdone! A few simple-minded amateurs, who can cut out cathedrals in cork, or design landscapes on a pie-board by means of a red-hot poker, or construct models of the Warrior or the Lord Mayor's coach, are got together; then the advertising tradesmen shovel-in their goods by cartloads, and plenty of flags and a brass band are laid on, and a Bishop or a Lord is secured to open the show, and a prayer is said, the Old Hundredth sung, and an address delivered; and the public are expected to pay sixpence and a shilling each to stare at that which they may see any day in Hanway Yard or the Burlington Arcade for nothing.

Put on your considering-cap, and you will find that Dublin is melancholy. They are doing better business than of old time, I hear, at the handsome and well-appointed Theatre Royal; and there are sparkling entertainments at the Queen's; and as brave singing, I suppose, as of yore at Tuck's. Cabs and ale are to be had, and ginger is hot i' the mouth; and there are Irishmen extant who can indulge in the pursuit of toddy, even to the tenth tumbler without turning a hair; and a good deal of fun and jollity reigns among a people who would be funny and jolly on the eve of the Deluge—and on the morning after it, could they contrive to escape drowning. But there are too many lawyers and too many soldiers; there are too many shabby, half-deserted houses; too many brooding, squalid streets; too many untidy, shiftless, hopeless-looking men and women in this beauteous but decadent city. Dublin does not look happy. She does not look prosperous. The statisticians may tell me that I err; but in the face of whole columns of figures I should be of the same opinion still.

PRIVATE THEATRICALS

ONE of the features of the very curious times we live in is the delight we find in putting red paint upon our cheeks, smirching our eyebrows, making our heads hot and uncomfortable with plenty of false hair, and decorating our figures with clothes of a very poor material, but apparently of the most costly sort. This is the very basis of the pleasure found in the "private theatricals" which are in such extravagant vogue at the present time of speaking. There is of course the getting by heart and delivery of certain speeches, and the grouping and attitudinising in a very full and inconvenient glare; but with three-fourths of the crowd the more exquisite of the attendant joys is found in the almost Indian self-transformation first mentioned.

It is a little hard to account for the special delight of these exercises; for beyond question there *is* a surprising charm and attraction that reaches far above all the known diversions. Your invitation for the ball or "rout" or "drum" is languidly received; but name the word "plays," and animation and curiosity begin to sparkle in the invited's eyes. It is a festival to be looked forward to eagerly; and with inconvenient and undesirable enthusiasm, the host will be assured that, come what will,—fire, famine, and pestilence alone reserved,—he will see his guest's face unfailingly, not only in his stalls on the great night, but also early and punctually in his place. There is no exemption: the worn-down matron, who has run in fashionable shafts till she is fit only for some social knacker's yard, will make a desperate effort, have herself braced-up, her "coat" well curried, her harness renewed, and come ambling in with all the air and bearing of a fresher and younger animal. So too with the "father," who is of no use on the face of this wide earth, even as a guard of honour for his children, and who actually has a knack of blocking up your exits and entrances with his more than inconvenient person; whose very apparition hath a heavy, mercantile, unfestive association, and whose speech seems as much behind the age we are living in, as it is slack and slow of utterance. What have such obstructive bulks of humanity to do with our shows? The obsequious and sustained smiling, with which they strive to show that they are not behind the meaning of what is going forward, is simply fatuous. Yet *they must come too*; they would not miss it for the world. Not unfrequently Mrs. Walker will come at the head of her tribe (you can barely seat fifty in your scant apartments); and when you are execrating her rapacity in the matter of girls, she will of a sudden thrust her offspring back and pull forward the

oblong and efflorescent sausage of humanity who is sire to the whole, and who from half pride or shyness is hanging back. "Even Mr. Walker," his lady tells you with pride, "*would* come."

Unquestionably there is a fascination about the stage and its properties, apparatus, and associations, for which we can find no parallel in the other shows of life. They seem lifted into the category of the Arabian Nights and the Fairy Tales. For part of this reverence and delight we must go back to the old days when we were "taken to the play," and the green curtain seemed to shroud the Temple of Delights, and orange-peel and gas combined seemed the most exquisite of known fragrances. On whatever basis founded, it is a fact that the feeling endures to the end of life, even in despite of the rudest shocks; when it is forced on us by the sternest logic that actors are the proudest and most practical of workmen, and that the stage itself is the most dull and dreary of handicrafts. The entrance to the green-room is still the entrance to the enchanted castle—and we believe in the scenery and footlights, and the serious mystery which belongs to every theatre when the grand folds of the green curtain are "down" in all their majesty—even to the very end. The worst disenchantment of all—shall it be confessed?—is the actors: their stearine cheeks and "blue" marks of frequent rasping, and the shine and polish which will break out on certain places of the histrionic hat.

Searching back to very early days, I can see what a delightful position in the distant imagery of childhood was filled by this theatrical element. The very posters on the dead walls—fiery and flamboyant in their characters—were a feast. The details were gorgeous. The feeling of reading them was akin to that of perusing some delicious story-book. All their traditional vaunts and "swagger," as it may be called, were accepted with the most implicit trust. The gorgeous men and women who belonged to the drama could hardly speak in too magnificent a strain. Not yet had I seen the stearine cheeks, and the blue stubble, and the smooth patches in the hat. I only knew the paradisaical pink cheeks, and glorified raiment of the stage, as seen once a year at the pantomime. What wistful yearnings—what longing tendings of the heart during the blank interval! But right-minded parents, scarcely realising the too, too exquisite pleasure of the childish mind in these joys, have rigorously decreed that there shall be but one glimpse per annum, and that at the proper season.

Driven in upon ourselves, we could at least break out into the local and homely drama, as supported by our own resources. This was rather encouraged by authority, as tending to give declamatory habits and shaking off *mauvaise honte*. These were delightful seasons; and the whole resources of the house, with a small pecuniary grant, were placed at our disposal. The season selected was usually when some contemporaries of either sex were on a visit. Such was the advent of the charming Amelia Hozier, perhaps a granddaughter of the luck-

less Admiral, and since ripened into a regular belle, dancing with foot-captains, &c. She even then showed a readiness and repartee which has since stood to her; and she would take a small part, and face the difficulties of the costume with a boldness beyond all praise. We essayed all branches of the drama. Shakespeare, Sheridan, and Mrs. Barbauld were most run upon.

There was a house at the sea-side which offered magnificent opportunities for the drama, and which the manager, then but ten years old, detected during the treaty for its engagement, and was in terror, looking to the interests of the drama, lest it should not be concluded; for the drawing-room opened by large and roomy double glass-doors into a greenhouse. It was suspected that the late proprietor must have had an incidental eye, as it were, to the drama, as well as to horticulture, when projecting this arrangement. It was delightful "getting-up" the thing, which was usually done during vacation, when the chief actors were at home, and the charming Amelia was more or less free. On the writer hereof devolved the preparation of "the bills." This was a great work, and had the true theatrical air. Something in the poster way was even attempted.

The grand piece in which our strength was considered to lie, and which was often called, was the excellent Mrs. Barbauld's *Alfred*, which may be found in her *Evenings at Home*, written by the same lady in conjunction with her admirable brother. The writer always acted the unfortunate English king; and the shrewish goatherd's wife was played with admirable effect by the charming Amelia Hozier. It was considered the writer's strong part; and his invectives against the "Danish wolves," delivered with great fire and animation, were held by shrewd observers to portend sure and certain declamatory success at the bar. A deputy-lieutenant's sword protruding from under his cloak—always a sign of affliction—was much admired. It was one of the few bits of realistic furniture we possessed. The only difficulty was at the close, when the misadventure of the burned cakes brought "on" the goatherd and his wife, a villager or two, and the king himself. This reasonably absorbed the whole strength of the company; yet still there was Ella—the faithful Ella—who had been at the head of a party of troops scouring the country for days in search of his lost king. The army we could do without. Any person of common intelligence could suppose their presence in the outskirts of the greenhouse, among the flowerpots. But Ella had to come in (in the deputy-lieutenant's cocked-hat), kneel, and discover to the angry goatherd and his wife in whose presence they were, by simply saying, "My liege! my lord! my sovereign master!" No ingenuity could get rid of this officer, his kneeling, and his speech. The exigencies of the situation required that this palpable recognition in the flesh, as it were, should be done. Any pretence of going about the matter—the goatherd's being made to say, "I see soldiers without, wife; they are

coming this way and asking for the king," would be only a poor fiction. The audience would require the *surprise*—the introduction of new blood. At one time it was thought of sending out the goatherd on some pretext, and letting him make his entry as Ella; but here again we saw that this would only be a slight to the understanding of the audience, who were too familiar with our appearance, or might perhaps become confused in the plot, and suppose that the goatherd had suddenly gone into the army, or reassumed his old rank there.

In this emergency—and indeed we were at our wits' end—I shall never forget the devotion of a female relation—an aunt on the mother's side—who saw and took pity on our distress. She, albeit unused and shrinking from the necessary publicity, came forward and volunteered for the part, spent the proper time necessary for rehearsal, and was heard in her room conning the part: "My liege! my lord! my sovereign master!"—(we did not then know or care for Smike's "Who calls so loud?")—and on the night in question, came on gallantly in the deputy-lieutenant's cocked-hat (that officer's uniform being distributed among the whole strength of the company) and a flowing cloak. As the action was all but instantaneous—Ella dropping on one knee the instant he entered, and was lost in a mass of cloak, deputy-lieutenant's cocked-hat, &c., the effect was bewildering—to say nothing of the surprise, for the audience knew of our dearth of actors, and were lost in speculation as to who could be under the cloak, deputy's cocked-hat, &c. Care had been taken to supply whiskers and a heavy moustache, by rich and lavish corking, which indeed did well enough, and her own mother could scarcely have known the disguised lady. It passed off admirably; though Ella's voice was remarked to falter hysterically before he could get out his declarations of loyalty, "My liege!" &c. And, indeed, now that I look back, there does indeed seem an air of grotesque over the appearance of the king's officer.

Sometimes the drama in the green-house was strengthened by the additional attraction of conjuring and magic. Then the combination was dazzling. The wizard was robed in a dressing-gown made more gaudy than ever ordinary dressing-gown was, by flashy adornments sewed on. There was a peaked cap and spectacles. He talked with immense fluency, as the manner of other wizards is, and changed coloured fluids into other coloured fluids merely by pouring them from one glass to another. These wonders, with many more, remarkable for their simplicity and happy independence of all costly apparatus, were chiefly gathered from a darling volume then much in fashion with the rising youth, and known as *THE BOY'S OWN BOOK—own book*, observe: giving a title as it were—a delicate warning to masters and others in authority. But great and humorous effect was added by the talents of the lively Amelia, who consented to blacken her face and dress herself as Sambo, the assistant of the wizard. With a very little training she could soon roll her eyes and say "Yis, massa,"

with true Ethiopian grotesque. Sambo pretended to make mistakes, to bring wrong bottles, and even to cry when reproved. A girl of surprising genius, who rather diverted public attention, and what was worse, public applause, from the wizard himself: not but that he was of too high-souled a nature to grudge her the well-earned fame.

How pleasant to look back to are *successful* dramatic nights! We have most of us some such recollections. But the country house makes the best background. I can recal the old castle and the stage put up in the large oak hall by the house-carpenter—an ingenious creature and handy fellow. The stage was awkward of access and rather straitened for room, every actor who came on or went off having to climb on or climb off by a steep stair. Still it was wonderful. The rustic agriculturists came in crowds. The neighbours, parsons' wives and daughters, &c., almost accumulated. I recal the rows of open, laughing, agricultural faces, gaping up with delight over the flame of the foot-lights. The local band—was it a temperance?—were seated in the orchestra; but they had brought their big drum, and it was cruel to check this performer's efforts. He would have felt it acutely, and as a slight. Besides, he was of signal value in covering little slips, and what courtesy towards well-meant exertions would call little slips. Every one was delighted with every thing. It was indeed easy to procure a laugh. The leader of the band had once played the horn in a country theatre "on the circuit;" and he said confidentially that he had rarely seen better playing. There was a supper and a dance afterwards. A pleasant night indeed, with a cold gray morning afterwards, and scatter of the company.

The CHARADE obtained for a time a hold upon English country-house favour, which it is delightful to think is fast failing. This free-and-easy foolery is based upon an utter want of respect for any audience, and is a mere coign of vantage for a wanton display of selfishness, vanity, and insatiate greed. What the tub is to the pulpit, and the street-preacher to the regular clergyman, the charade is to the drawing-room play, and the charade-actor to the drawing-room player. We all know the funny creature who, only an hour before, proposes to "get up," he calls it, a little *impromptu* thing to amuse them all. The funny creature is usually in the public service, military or civil, and has been so encouraged by obstreperous young lady-laughter, that he would volunteer to black his face and sing "The whole hog or none" at Buckingham Palace. He takes every thing on himself, which would seem to mean the drudging labour and trouble; but his gulls, thirsting for publicity also, will be undeceived by and by. Usually there is a cold, staid, hard effrontery, more disciplined and less spontaneous than her companion. She, if the occasion pressed, or the thing in her own tongue "paid," would not object to give her diverting performance on a platform in the middle of Aldershott; not, mark you, that she would

not shrink from such an exhibition with a scream even, but only provided the matter could be decently sanctioned and fall in with the common social run of life. At her the funny creature usually looks with distrust; but he dare not ignore her. She is *not* to be ignored. Better, like great states, make common cause, and divide the little kingdoms. The herd wait with gaping delight, ready to do what they are told. In a very few minutes the whole is chalked out. "Capital" words are thought of in a second, where you and I might be racking our brains for a week. Comic situations are devised, and flow from each other with an inspiration that seems almost divine. Wonderful what clever people can do! After dinner the dresses have been found, the "stage" arranged, the parts allotted, every thing thought of. "You are to come on as a servant, my dear fellow. Capital dress. Get yourself an apron. *I'll* tell you when to come in." "And what am I to do and to say?" "*O, leave that to me. I'll* pull you through. You just come in like a servant, and leave all the rest to me." And the same did the trained young lady. "Look here, dear; you are to be an old grandmamma, and sit in a chair, with spectacles, &c." "My dear" is a pretty young thing whom it is more than likely the manageress is not sorry to disfigure a little thus publicly. But my dear is also a good "little thing," and will get some "fun" out of her part. "Capital! *I'll* make up, you shall see." "And what am I to say? what am I to do?" "*Leave all that to me,*" says the trained young lady. "I'll get you through. You just sit in your chair and wear your spectacles. A capital part."

The result is simply an exhibition of the grossest selfishness and greed. Mr. Weeder, the professional charade-acter, is always "on;" once he gets the "parole" he never lets it go. He is visited with the most extravagant "flux of mouth;" he can talk on end for ten minutes, and has a marvellous flow of ideas. In vain the "man-servant" strives to get in the little jocose remark he has prepared with infinite labour and study. He has just started, when some brilliant thought strikes Mr. Weeder, who cuts him short at once. He tries again later. Mr. Weeder has something more brilliant still, and plunges in when he has got two words out. No wonder it is agreed "behind the scenes" that that Weeder is a selfish beast that will give no one an innings. He is not content with that even. He snatches at every thing. Is there a new figure wanted on an emergency, "Here, leave it to me," says Weeder; "I won't be a second. I'll go on." And he does go on, and "sticks his oar in," as usual. There is great grumbling behind, and a disposition to mutiny; but Weeder—secure, as he fancies, in public support—is not even conscious of this feeling; nay, he thinks he has been rather accommodating and self-sacrificing. But once his eyes were opened a little roughly—by a Major Watkyn, I think. The Major, a man of the world, and about forty-three, greatly liked, and with a pleasant vein of humour in him, had been pressed to "take a

part" in the charades at Westbury, which, as we all know from the local paper (admitted for favour) was a leading feature in the Christmas sports of that noble house. Mr. Weeder had been brought down special, and was to go through the round of his *impromptu* characters. We were all in the "green-room," as the little octagon room was called, and Weeder was as usual receiving brilliant inspirations of genius, *that of course* came to him on the moment. "You'll come on a servant-man, Jones," he was going on, according to the old story. "Capital part. Just come in; give me the letter, and go out. Get yourself a white apron and a blue jane jacket." "But what am I to say?" "O, never mind; *leave all that to me.*" The future butler looked a little crestfallen. But the pretty little Polly Honeycombe, a bright sparkling creature, was cast imperiously by Weeder for a nurse. "Just get a cap and an apron, you know, and sit in a chair, as if you were asleep; then *I'll come in* and carry it through." "But what am I to say?" asked Polly. "I don't like being a nurse." "O, you'll do very well. Leave it all to me. Just sit on your chair and—"

"I think," said Major Watkyn quietly, "you are giving Miss Polly too good a part, eh? She'll never do it."

"O, never fear," said Weeder, laughing. "I am sure she'll be a capital actress; besides she has only to sit in a chair, and cry, and look like a nurse."

"And just say yes and no?" asked the Major innocently.

"Just say yes and no," repeated Weeder eagerly. "Leave it all to me. *I'll carry it through.*"

"Egad! so it seems," said the Major. "We are all to sit in chairs, and say yes and no. It comes to that, it seems to me."

"O no," said Weeder colouring. "There must be some one to carry the thing through, you know; it breaks down if there isn't."

"Well, that some one needn't be one fellow," said the Major. "I object to being carried through; I can do it for myself. And for Miss Polly here, I object to her being stuck in a chair and made a silent old nurse of. Tell us candidly, are you going to stick us all in chairs, and make old nurses of us, eh?"

There was a loud laugh. Weeder said, with an offended air, that he didn't understand; that he had a good deal of experience in such things—he had acted a great deal; that he knew how the thing would turn out unless there was one spirit; but we were quite welcome, &c.

"Exactly, my dear fellow," said the Major good-humouredly, "I know we are. *You've had your* experience, as you say; how are we to get *our* experience, and rise to eminence in the drama, unless we act? I want to get a little distinction before I die; and so does Miss Polly here, I am sure; but if you make us old nurses, and stick us in chairs, we'll never have a chance. Now I propose a little alteration. Suppose Miss Polly to be a smart maid, with ribbons in her cap, coquettish

—in short, the reverse of what she is? I shouldn't object to be a valet or a footman, or any thing you like. And what do you say, Miss Polly? we'll come on and have a scene together, all to ourselves, and no interruption; try what we can do, eh?"

This proposal was supported so tumultuously that it could not be resisted. Weeder was very sulky at first, until the Major said, "What's wrong, Weeder? Take care, or they'll say you grudged me and Miss Polly our little parts. I know you don't; but they would say it in a minute."

In various other arrangements the Major interfered advantageously with modest suggestions, all tending in the same direction—to secure the company more favourable chances of distinction. It was remarked, too, that the Major's proposals all tended to the advantage of the little drama, and were adopted at once.

What was the result? On the night of the performance Weeder's old spirit began to rise, and as usual, in presence of the audience, he began to "tumble" and rattle on, being here and every where, and interrupting every body, until the Major came on, made up like a steady English imperturbable valet. He was received with delight. The Major was perfectly natural, and said some excellent things. But in a moment Weeder came plunging in, interrupting as usual. The Major was very patient for a time, until Miss Polly came on—a most delightfully smart housemaid as ever could be conceived. She got out one or two very nice little piquancies, but was cut short, like all the rest, in a second. In a moment the Major came in with an "aside" to the audience, "Lord, what sort of a chap this feller must be! Other masters takes the bread out of your mouth; but this feller takes the *very words* out of your mouth."

Weeder was a good deal taken aback by this reproof, but he soon recovered, and was as bad as ever. Then the Major and Miss Polly had *their* scene—such a capital one, every one said—such good love-making—such archness and smartness on Miss Polly's side; which the Major, a very unselfish "good fellow," brought out purposely. Then he very slyly "walked into" Weeder, to the great enjoyment of the company. "I wouldn't go to him, Susy," John said, "for an 'undred pound a year, meals in the parlour included. Why, I'd lose my 'earing in a week. Clatter, clatter!—let no one speak but himself. Why, Susy, look here: what would you think of a cricketer as 'ud want to have all the battin' and the bowlin' for himself? what would you think of a feller at a dinner as 'ud want to 'ave all the heatin' and the drinkin' for hisself? I say, Susy, it's all wanity—all wanity. What do you say, Susy?"

Susan said smartly that "she 'oped as he'd never 'ave a lady for *her* to be lady's own maid to, which indeed she thought was very unlikely; for a gent as wouldn't let his wife talk, but would do all the talk himself, *deserved* to be tore by wild 'orscs."

Poor Weeder, standing at the wings, heard all this. He lost heart, and was not himself for the rest of the time. But it was agreed by every body that the Major had done him a world of good.

The weariness of charades after the first scene or so! The monotony that sets in! the all-but yawning! the weak buffoonery! the poor flat runnings from poor flat minds! The desperate efforts to restore the spirit of the thing, by some palpable buffoonery that appeals to the senses—some face-blackening—some exercise with an umbrella or a shovel!—these things send the audience away dispirited. The thing never seems to end: the players, always insatiate, think they are delightful, and that they cannot give the audience enough of their labours. At the close of such performances, say, during the last word—which is not even known to be the last—I know no state of human despondency more hopeless or akin to hypochondria. There is no fun or festivity in the thing. It is besides a mere sham and deception; for any good in the matter has been artfully arranged—nay, got by heart beforehand. Let us give grateful thanks that the whole is well-nigh spent, and on the eve of being abolished.

How different the organised labour of purer theatricals! But here too there is great judgment required, which is often not forthcoming. The mistake lies in the choice of wrong plays for wrong places. For a country stage in a country house, where the rustics are admitted to the gallery, and the no less rustic squires attend with their wives and daughters, by all means have a good, rattling, tumbling farce, with plenty of the lowest comedy. But I speak now of the town—of the drawing stage at No. 20 Blank Street or Blank Square, with a refined and elegant audience. The back drawing-room here is your pit and boxes; the front drawing-room your stage. The window-curtains are distinctly seen; the fireplace it is difficult to shut out. At all events its presence—perhaps its outline—is distinctly felt. The household air cannot be got rid of. The only thing therefore is to challenge this association boldly—meet it distinctly, or conciliate it. *Make your play a drawing-room play; make its scenes take place in a drawing-room.* This is a cardinal point. Then you are saved from feeble make-believe and faint attempts in the matter of scenery. It is no harm to go back and try a little “court-dressing” of the Lewis’s day, but there should be no travelling out of the *salons* of the Lewis’s day.

There is nothing more charming than a bit of airy and elegant comedy, done by clever and competent ladies and gentlemen; and, let it be added, that ladies and gentlemen, with ordinary abilities, have a vast advantage over professionals—good breeding and refinement is sure to tell. Choose well-done translations of light French pieces. There are plenty like *The Morning Call* (one of De Musset’s best proverbes), or *The Subterfuge*, both marvels of elegant *mental* action, which, it will never be sufficiently understood, is superior as a source of interest to mere physical action. Of course the inimitably comic Captain Colter

will offer to black his face, and interpolate "The mouse-trap man," or some such lyrics, or even to dance a "break-down;" and he has a following who admire this sort of thing. Or Major Canby will say privately, "O, hang all this talking! let's have *The Steeplechase*; I can imitate Toole to the life. And I'll bring my own racing-jacket and boots; one of the best things you ever saw in your life. There is a scene where there's some groping for a hot-water jug with a walking-stick, that will make them split. And there's a railway behind. I can imitate an engine-whistle; you wouldn't know the difference." There will always be a party eager for the face-blackening—always a school who think the life of the drama must be bound up with sham railway-whistling and hot-water jugs. Mr. Crummles, his pump and tubs, was the father of this line; but it may be repeated there is nothing more charming than a little comedy on French lines, where a pretty and clever girl in the dress of our day, carries on a fence of words and mental chess with a clever man dressed in such clothes as Mr. Poole would send him home. A word too in the ear of our young ladies, if they will not think such whispering disrespectful. Such an exhibition—exhibition to the most extravagant extent being the present feature of our social life—would be more attractive and more profitable than other exhibitions that we all know of. It is conceded that something that all but touches on advertisement is the only line by which our charming traders can get rid of their wares. This is to be deplored; yet, if it must be accepted, why not choose this elegant and entertaining shape of advertisement? Phyllis, who wishes to gain her Colin, will have a chance of coquetries and gifts of fascination, for which the necessities of ordinary conversation will never provide opportunities. Here is *verb. sap.* And what a benefit here for our social Chelsea pensioners—our poor Invalides, who should be in the hospital for infirm and veteran chaperones, but who are now dragged out to field-duty! A supper is but a poor indemnity after all. This heart bleeds for these poor old unselfish soldiers, who must work in the ranks till they drop. If there were more of these little pastimes at various houses, their long nights would be pleasanter; it would be their pipe and pot of ale in the Sun; their minds would be amused. Matilda and Charlotte, taking part in the show, would have their minds a little opened and cultivated, which God knows are sadly deficient. Let us not always be cantering through the reeling valse; a little alteration will be acceptable. There is no lack of ability or material; some of us may know—at least the writer does—clever girls fit to take any part, graceful and mournful *tragédiennes*, sprightly and brilliant *comédiennes*. This is one of the reforms. Music and dancing should not be the sole functions of society; there are other arts waiting their turn.

PERCY FITZGERALD.

VACILLATING CHARACTERS

EVERY one has met with certain persons whose path in life seems to be singularly free from the petty doubts and perplexities which fret and worry ordinary humanity; to whom error and uncertainty, indecision and doubt, can be little more than mere empty names. With head resolutely erect, with step firm and sure, they pass all the awkward turnings and abrupt angles in which the high road of existence abounds, without ever being puzzled as to which route it is best to follow, and which side it is the safest to take,—never bending down their gaze, or treading cautiously as they proceed, in nervous dread lest there should be some unseen obstacle to trip them up in their career of confident progress. However dense may be the intricacies in the web of life with which they are confronted, they are never at a moment's loss. Unchangeable self-reliance is written on every feature of their face, and infallibility is manifest in their figure and gait. If they are ever called upon by some weaker fellow-creature to give their judgment upon any knotty point, any *casus conscientie*, that might have puzzled the foremost of casuists himself, they are able promptly and readily to decide. To them it appears absolutely impossible that any view other than their own can be correctly taken. With the weak and the wavering, with those who are for ever halting between two opinions, they have no sympathy whatever. The manysidedness of truth never suggests itself to their minds for an instant. It is quite sufficient for them to hear what are the facts of the case; after a moment's reflection, they are prepared with their decision; nor are they troubled with a particle of subsequent doubt as to whether their judgment, after all, may be not without a flaw. Whatever they think *is*; and whatever thus is, is right. It is sufficiently obvious that the existence led by beings who are gifted with these powers of sublime self-confidence and entire absence of vacillation and doubt must be exempt from a great number of the pains and possibly the pleasures of life. On the one hand, they are not saddened by the constant presence of those mysteries and enigmas, those indefinable misgivings and harassing uncertainties which so often numb and paralyse the activities of a great portion of mankind; on the other, they must in great measure lack the qualities of sympathy and beneficence, from which, if there be any truth in the theories of more than one school of philosophers, so much of human happiness and delight arises. Their life resembles the waters of some chilly lake which the storm never ruffles, and which not even the lightest zephyr stirs. It is, as it were, one dead level of imperturbable content and self-reliance. Of mental history, according to the popular accepta-

tion of the expression, they have none. Autobiography is a task for which, in all probability, they would never have the least disposition; for, as a rule, the interest derivable from autobiographical history is that which is generally taken, whether by reader or writer, in the contemplation of a mind struggling and wrestling with itself; in the chronicling of its uncertainties and perplexities, its doubts and fears. It may be questioned, too, whether the exalted possessors of this form of mental organisation can ever meet with the same amount of affection and love that is accorded to their more frail and erring brethren. Certain, at least, it is, that the enjoyments which are supposed to spring from friendship and its accompanying phenomena, they can never adequately appreciate. Self-sufficient and self-contained, their comforts and their pleasures must in a measure spring from within rather than without. Advice they never need; and for this reason they will not perhaps miss those petty acts of kindness and attention without which life would to many be a dreary desolate blank.

It may be worth while to place in juxtaposition to the character which has just been described one that is as nearly its opposite as can well be imagined. The magnificence of strength is enhanced by the presence of weakness; and the glories of resolution will be all the better realised when they are viewed beside the feebleness of doubt. Besides, heroic self-confidence is not, as a matter of fact, of half such common occurrence as its opposite—vacillating indecision. There are more persons who are inclined to hesitate before they take any step of at all a decisive character, than who are able immediately to convince themselves of their own infallibility on any given emergency. If the perfectly self-reliant and self-satisfied intellect is a subject for admiration and awe, the mind that is perpetually beset by uncertainty and doubt as to the best course that can be taken not less often furnishes a spectacle which may provoke a smile. There is a certain class of people, with which none can be unfamiliar, who are incessantly tormented with agitating perplexities and self-questionings in the most absurdly trivial affairs of every-day life. They cannot perform the most ordinary action without experiencing a certain amount of discomfort consequent upon the thought that it would be possible to perform it more perfectly in some other manner than that they have chosen or at some other time. They are hemmed in on every side by mysterious distresses and vague beleaguering fears. They almost dread to stir hand or foot, lest the motion should prove destructive to themselves in some unforeseen way. They cannot write a letter without believing that they are saying something which would have been better omitted, and omitting something else that ought to have been said. An interview of any thing like a serious or business nature is enough to produce within them a perfect fever-heat of irritation and self-mistrust. What kind of an impression are they creating on their companion? Was it not indiscreet to have allowed such a sentiment to drop from their

lips in one place; and did they not lose an admirable opportunity of advancing their own interests by putting in a timely remark in another? These and a host of other similar misgivings will often render the existence of the martyr of vacillation a very hell of time. It is of course ridiculous enough that he should voluntarily incur such discomfort on occasions so entirely needless; but the torture which he condemns himself to undergo is not the less excruciating on that account. Theoretically there may be something very amusing in the anxiety which a young lady spends over her ball-room toilette; but it may well be believed that to her at least few undertakings can be matters of more intense seriousness. The amount of self-questioning and uncertainty which is gone through before each individual ornament is decided upon, might raise a smile on the face of the disinterested spectator; but to the fair victim of this internal agony nothing can be more harassing. Who knows but her whole future may depend upon the effect which she is that evening to produce? In the same way, the suspense and indecision of a person, whose vacillating tendencies exhibit themselves at times and on matters which might be thought utterly unimportant, may divert the by-stander, while he himself is consumed by discomfoting fears.

It is refreshing to witness the unquestioning and implicit trust which minds of this order are usually ready to repose in friends who are blessed with nervous susceptibilities less delicate and keen. Nor, indeed, is it unnatural that they should do so. It is obviously no inconsiderable advantage to have the whole burden of thought and labour of decision taken off their shoulders; in the same way they might experience a certain sense of relief in allowing some perfectly fortuitous occurrence to decide whether a thing was to be done or not to be done. The onus of responsibility will have been thrust off themselves; and this is all they desire. It is pleasant to be able to assure oneself, should the result prove a failure, that the false step was not, at any rate in the first place, attributable to any error of one's own. To be able to refer to a friend just as one would to a ready-reckoner or to some handbook of universal knowledge is doubtless exceedingly satisfactory; and it at least saves one an immensity of trouble and exertion. On the other hand, however, it is not without its drawbacks. The staunchest of well-wishers cannot always be so keenly alive to the interests of others as the interested person himself. His advice and recommendation may be thoroughly sound, but still there is a certain limit to the range and intensity of sympathy. It is unreasonable to suppose that the career of the man who judges for himself will not in the main be more successful than that of the man who expects others to judge and decide for him.

It is not a very difficult thing to assign the pettier forms of vacillation which have been here noticed to their proper cause,—a morbidly exaggerated sense of the importance which people in general are likely

to attach to the most unimportant and trivial of every-day actions; arising from, rather than identical with, a certain form of selfishness, and an imagination at once redundant and deficient. If persons would but liberate themselves from the blinding atmosphere of self, would endeavour to see themselves as they are seen by others, would scrutinise neither more nor less in themselves than what sober reflection would tell them will be scrutinised, thought of, or inquired into by that society to which they belong, the anxiety which springs from inherent vacillation before action, and vague unprofitable regret afterwards, would cease to torment them. The outside world, it is true, is by no means destitute of powers of observation; but they are not so frequently nor so unsparingly exercised as persons are apt to imagine. People in general are far too much engrossed by their own concerns to note each offence of omission or commission which the victims of this silly self-consciousness may exaggerate into actions which are sure to be noticed and very unlikely to be pardoned.

There are, however, one or two other varieties of this weakness, which spring from far deeper causes than a silly habit of extreme self-consciousness, and which cannot be treated of so lightly, nor eradicated so easily. It is quite possible, and even probable, that persons guilty of the forms of folly above noticed may either cure themselves, or else be cured by time and active experience of men and manners, of the notion that a curious world is accustomed carefully to weigh and consider every trivial act which they perform; that each word which they carelessly let slip from their mouth, each expression that falls from their pen in the course of writing a letter, will be critically weighed, and, if possible, misunderstood, by some malevolent and sharp-sighted Aristarchus. But the more serious developments of this tendency spring principally from somewhat different causes, and but too often are confirmed, rather than weakened and destroyed, by experience and years. The *Diary of the Right Honourable William Windham*, which has been lately published, affords a wonderful example of this. It is difficult to know by what name best to describe a trait of character which approaches more nearly to the nature of a disease than a folly—the result, apparently, of an excessive amount, rather than of a deficiency, of mental training. Hypochondria, morbid hesitation, or whatever called, it is, generally speaking, consequent upon over-taxed energies, over-wrought sensibilities, and intense earnestness. Mr. Windham's life might indeed be considered typical of no inconsiderable number, who, commencing with a close and unsparing investigation of everything that can be urged both in favour of and against any particular course of conduct, not unseldom end by arriving at a "nervous dread of doing even the commonest things, and losing hours and days in deliberating whether the most trifling matters are to be performed or neglected." Besides this, in the case of Mr. Windham, as in the case of others, the predisposition to vacillation is undoubtedly aggravated by the very means



ON BRIGHTON PIER

THERE was no scene, no tragic rage,
No bitter words, no wailing cry,
Only a look, one look, and he
Still bowing as she pass'd him by,
Still hat in hand, though cheek and brow
And lips were quivering with shame,
That seem'd to crimson the low clouds
And flush the shuddering waves with flame.

Few saw it. Few! We do not gauge
Dishonour by refined degrees,—
Let but a glance behold our shame,
And all the world the horror sees :
And this our chivalry retains
Upon its fore-front rightly borne—
That knighthood sickens of disgrace,
And man is slain of woman's scorn.

Had she no pity? Did her eyes
Look him to death without dismay?
Whate'er she felt or did not feel
None gazing on her face might say :
The silken fringes swept her cheek,
The clear gray eyes play'd well their part,—
As keen and pitiless as steel
Those rapiers that had pierced his heart !

Another hour she paced the pier,
Till shoreward fashion's tide had roll'd,—
A moonlit statue's marble face
Less bright than hers, but not more cold :
Whate'er her wrong, it was avenged,
And she was placid in the thought ;
And yet a cruel, cruel deed
Those eyes within an hour had wrought !



J. Thomson, del.

W. L. Thomas, sc.

ON BRIGHTON PIER.

Cruel? Ah, yes! Let man but dare
 To strike, to lash him on the face,
 To leave a livid, tingling welt,
 A burning witness of disgrace,—
 He has redress: he meets his foe
 Some glimmering mora on Calais sands,
 And one sharp shot in that still hour
 May give back honour to his hands.

But if a woman strike a blow,
 He cannot turn, nor she atone;
 Even to question is to make
 Her wrong—if she have err'd—his own.
 The social right—the right to “cut”—
 Power absolute has grown at length:
 Man’s courtesy aids woman’s rule,
 And to her beauty adds his strength.

Freely that right to rule and sway
 Each would to womanhood accord,—
 Ay, though he sometimes found a look
 May wound as sharply as a sword:
 But—may we say with bated breath?—
 Usage is sanctified in use;
 And even tyranny has found
 Its hidden pitfalls in abuse.

And O, how that poor right to harm
 Is beggar’d by the power to spare!
 Justice accords the right to strike,
 But Mercy teaches to forbear.
 A glance may kill; but what is she
 Whose heart no tenderness can melt?—
 A savage queen, who smiles because
 Her lover’s scalp adorns her belt.

W.

BELGRAVIAN PROSE BALLADS

No. III.

HONEYMOONSHINE

My own!

Well, I'm not so sure of that. Of course I don't mean that there was any thing incorrect about the bans, or that there is any flaw in the contract; but you see Clara never would give up the portrait of that insipid idiot, cousin Gus. Not that I am jealous of Gus; but Clara has never asked me to give her my *carte de visite*; and then there is Clara's sweet-tempered maternal, who is continually hinting, since we came back from Geneva, that I shall be her daughter's death. Why did I not first make sure that Clara was an orphan before I followed her cab home from that ball?

It was a charming ball all the same, or I should say, anyhow. When you know that a girl's card is full for every dance, and when that girl—who must be pretty, or her card would not fill—gives you to understand that she will throw over any number of waltzers rather than leave you outside, it is enough to make any man's head turn. And on that occasion wherever she went my eyes followed; and as my eyes were only capable of limited volition, my head turned, and no one came in or out of the ball-room without my looking up to see if it was Clara. Of course I did not call her Clara then. I think it was the lemon-ice so happily married to a glass of champagne that did it.

My own! my beautiful!

Well, I am not so sure about that either. I thought any quantity of false back-hair would fail to deceive me. But Clara had a way of towzling her chignon which would have caught Truefitt himself; and when I first discovered that hairy lump of vanity attached to that very comb I had so often wished, in sportive mood, to pull out surreptitiously, that I might behold in all their wavy splendour those locks that—those locks which were a continual feast to my craving eyes,—when, I say, I discovered the feast to be a movable one, I felt much as I do on arriving at Dover some sunny day, when I have pictured to myself a calm sea and a prosperous voyage equal to Mendelssohn's, and find a nasty droppy swell that would upset an East Indiaman or unhinge a black cook.

My beautiful! my true!

Well, I am not altogether certain of that either. What a fuss Clara's mother used to make about her girl's complexion! I never felt the force then of her lamentations about what it had cost her—heaven knew—to bring up her girls. It will cost me a great deal more to bring Clara down. By the way, my wife said that was tooth-powder which I saw in the drawer where that ghastly back-hair was lying; lying is the word. Now, I've a shrewd notion tooth-powder ought not to be labelled "Madame Leah's Blush-reviver." That reminds me, I never saw till the other day that miniature of Clara in her girlish days. Why, her hair was nearly black then! Can it really be that living in the country and going out without a hat on can turn black hair to gold? Gold! Well, I don't know that I should call it gold now, but it certainly is an unhealthy straw colour. I have observed, towards the end of the week, the roots of her hair seem darker. I must find out that too. After all, I may be doing her a wrong.

My own! my devoted one!

Am I quite certain of that too? Of course I never supposed wives were created to look after buttons. Adam, lucky dog, had no shirts to want them. That's a mere joke that those funny writers who are still bachelors will have; but I had expected—I've no doubt it was foolish—that some one would think now and then, say on Sundays, about making my tea in the morning, I had so often pictured to myself the domestic charm of a breakfast *tête-à-tête*—you will say it was weak of me—pressing her to take this, and being amiably forced to try that. Of course it would be unreasonable to expect to have every thing. Then there's Clara's health; so I must not complain if she does breakfast in bed; at least so the doctor says. And then again, how I enjoy a little music in the evening, just when a good glass of claret and a slice of saddle have put me into a good-humoured calm, which a little more would turn to a siesta! Clara will sing when that irrepressible obstacle cousin Gus is here. He is a connoisseur; but I don't understand music. No; but I used to adore Clara when she sang '*Per che*' something, and still could go on my knees to her when she condescends to open her larynx; but she never does when we are alone—at least not musically.

My treasure still! my ever-loved!

Well, I think that is not quite so. I am sure I was much more spooney on—well, I won't mention names; but if she hadn't thrown me over—heartless creatures they all are—I should

never have followed Clara's cab home from the ball. Ah, how different that would have been! But it's no use making oneself miserable. I don't suppose it makes any difference to her; her husband's a baronet now, and she has four horses and a large family. No, Clara, I won't! It is wrong, very wrong. I won't think of her; only of you, dearest. There's *that* mother coming to stay the week. The week! Last time it lasted seven months. That was before marriage. What will it be this time! I fear I am not young enough to apply for a queen's messengership; but I might emigrate to the Salt Lake.

My own for ever!

THE FOUR SUITS

I. Diamonds

RICH gems on her white arms glittered and shone,
Rich jewels were in her hair,
As she walked through the midst of a worshipping throng,
The fairest of all the fair.

Fairest of all whom Fashion and Wealth
Had bound in their fetters of gold ;
Can eyes so bright ever lose their light ?
Can such fairy forms grow old—

Old and yellow and withered and wan,
Palsied and haggard and bent,
Grudgingly giving a backward glance
To the time so heedlessly spent ?

Why speak of *that* when the hours run by,
The intoxicating hours,
Glitter and sparkle and flutter and flash,
Music and jewels and flowers ?

In the maze of the waltz she is borne along,
The maze of the maddening dance ;
Her dark eyes look up from *his* shoulder now
To his face with a loving glance.

Wistfully tender, yet wilfully proud,
As a high-born maiden will,
She would fain be sovereign-queen of his heart—
Yet she is but a *woman* still ;

And knows that to give to his hand, *unsought*,
The reins of her ardent soul,
Is to lose her value, and gain of his heart
But a part, instead of the whole.

Whirl onward ! Ye are a well-matched pair ;
Beauty and fortune and birth ;
Yet, soldier noble and maiden fair,
Ye must both of ye come to—*Earth* !

II. Spades

Cheerily, cheerily whistleth he
 To his whetstone on the lawn ;
 Nor slumber nor sleep his eyelids keep,
 For he was awake with the dawn ;

Awake with the dawn, the dewy dawn,
 When the whitethorn buds blow sweet,
 And the green grass bendeth its tender blades
 To the touch of the blackbird's feet.

'Twas allotted to Adam to dig and delve—
 To his sons 'tis an heir-loom still ;
 Yet what *was* a *curse* may a *blessing* prove,
 If the work be done with a will.

Who is't comes tripping along the walk,
 So spruce, so enticingly trim ?
 The chairs are dusted, the cloth is laid ;
 So now for a talk with *him*.

Nimble she trips o'er the gravelled path
 With a not unwinning grace,
 The bright rose-red in her muslin cap
 Scarce so bright as her comely face.

Sure 'tis a neighbourly act to wish
 " Mr. Gardener " good day ;
 Damon and Phyllis in rustic life
 Care nothing what folks may say.

They are not trammelled by " etiquette,"
 Nor sacrifice nature to art ;
 And if it may be their *manner* is free,
 Forgive it for sake of the *heart*.

Work, work cheerily, man and maid,—
 Work on, work, ye who can ;
 For a true love-spirit halloweth toil,
 And to work is the lot of man.

III. Clubs.

'Twas mesilf and me Bidy got married,
 Saint Pathrick's day was a year ;
 Didn't Bidy look clane and look dacent,
 And mesilf a spruce boy, niver fear.

The praisit he hild open his fingers—
 The ould rogue, 'twas a tirrorible fee ;
 Be the powers, he laid it on nately
 For jining me Bidy and me.

Sure we had in the frinds and the naybors ;
 The "craythur" wint merrily round ;
 And some of us lay on the binches,
 And some of us fell on the ground.

'Tis mesilf who don't know how it happened,
 But there was a mighty fine row ;
 The shillelaghs were whirling and flying ;
 Och, murther ! I feel Connor's now.

We injied ourselves purty and dacent ;
 Sure we had an iligant faist ;
 'Twas mesilf and me Bidy they toasted,
 And bad cess to the covetous praisit.

'Twasn't him who should ax for a fee, thin,
 From a couple so dacent and poor ;
 Sure we might have had lashins of whisky,
 Till we all of us fell on the floör.

Bad luck, in the morning I wakened—
 'Twas mesilf that felt dridfully ill ;
 Be Jabers, the bars on the windies
 Tould me I was in a p'lice cill.

'Twas a beautiful piece of injiment ;
 They fined me and rated me twice ;
 But a weddin' don't come every mornin',
 And sure it was *chape at the price*.

THE FOUR SUITS

IV. Hearts

A benevolent smile on her young face sits,
 A sweet heart-smile fair to see,
 And her calm brown eyes shine out with the light,
 With the light of true charity;

A lustre that glistens with purer ray
 Than the diamond's brightest sheen ;
 And the gray silk sits on her slender form
 Like the purple robe of a queen.

From the rectory door she is hastening forth
 Alone on this Christian's day,
 Scattering bounties upon the poor,
 Gathering prayers in her way.

If her life be spent in such silent good,
 Is her "talent" given in vain ?
 Not so, not so ; for whose steward she is
 Will pay it tenfold again.

True, 'tis but small ; yet if measured out
 All carefully into parts,
 It can blessings sow wherever it goes,
 Bring joy to a thousand hearts.

At her quiet touch see the sorrowing smile,
 The suffering eyes grow bright ;
 She is welcomed, welcomed, wherever she goes,
 As a blessed angel of light.

Walk on, sweet minister to the sick,
 Dear comforter of the poor ;
 Walk on, young cherisher of the old ;
 And when death shall knock at thy door,

Thou shalt hearken to words, unto blessed words,
 Unto words that shall come to *thee* :
 "Inasmuch as thou didst it to one of these,
 Thou didest it unto Me."

ASTLEY H. BALDWIN.

HOW I HEARD MY OWN WILL READ

It was wrong to be led away by Scavenger. Scavenger was the third favourite for the St. Leger; and a sporting prophet of some celebrity, Mr. Mooney Dooem, of Little Hocus-street, London-road, Manchester, assured me, for the moderate consideration of three shillings and sixpence in postage stamps, that if I wanted to do a good thing for myself, the way to set about it was to back Scavenger with all the loose cash I could lay my hands on.

Now, I am not a sporting man, and I don't know much of horse-flesh. If I had met Scavenger drawing a parcels-delivery van, my sense of the fitness of things would not have been jarred by the circumstance; nevertheless, I like a race. Yes, I am passionately devoted to a race. I make a point of taking Mrs. Pettifer to Epsom and Hampton races every spring. I like champagne and lobster-salad. I like to wear a green veil, and to talk to admiring servant-girls at open windows on the dusty road. I used to like chaffing the toll-keeper—one feels *so* witty in a barouche and pair. I like having my fortune told. I like coming home in the evening with my mind in a pleasing state of uncertainty as to whether it is the day before yesterday or the day after to-morrow; and I like finishing the evening with iced punch, another lobster, and a “frienly rub-r-r-r.”

So I backed Scavenger. On Saturday I gave six to five on him, on Monday I gave five to four on him, and on Tuesday my partner Peck (Peck and Pettifer, solicitors, Gray's-inn) made me give him seven to three on that abominable brute. Peck always backs the field. He is a cautious man, and never means to marry. He makes unpleasant puns about not wanting to be hen-Pecked. I have laughed at that doleful joke so long from sheer habit, that if I heard it in a funeral sermon I believe I should burst into a loud guffaw; and I give you my honour I never thought it funny in the whole course of my life. I am rather afraid of Peck, if the truth must be told, for I think he looks down upon me. I remember once, after a jovial night we had together, going to the office next morning with a labyrinth of streaky red marks all over my face; and when I told him that I had awoke and found the cat walking over my face, he looked as if he didn't believe me.

I backed Scavenger; and then it struck me that as Peck was going down to Doncaster for the St. Leger week, I really ought to go too. I could afford the week's holiday quite as well as Peck, though I was not a single man. So I told Mrs. Pettifer that I must run down to Yorkshire to wait on one of our best clients, who was going to marry his eldest daughter (to somebody else of course), and who required my

professional services for the preparation of the settlements. Now I suppose Yorkshire sounded rather vague, for Mrs. Pettifer asked immediately what part of Yorkshire I was going to. I replied, as immediately, Slitherem-on-the-Dwingey. Now I don't know of any town answering to that name in Yorkshire; but that is no reason there should not be such a place, and I thought the address would be reassuring to Mrs. P.; and so it was. Unfortunately, she wanted me to write it down. I could not have spelt it if you had offered me a million of money; so I told my esteemed Julia Maria that I would write to her the minute I reached Slitherem; and so departed.

That brute Scavenger was nowhere, and my loose cash was jingling in the pockets of the prudent Peck half an hour after the great race. The cup was won by an outsider of obscure lineage, a rawboned chestnut animal with one white fore-leg, which made him look as if he had dressed himself in a hurry and had forgotten to put on his other stocking. Peck had backed him, and came away from the course with his leathern pocket-book distended, as in a dropsy, with bank-notes. I hated him with a deep and undying hatred; but as he asked me to dine with him at the Reindeer, I went.

He is a brute (perhaps I have said that before), but he is, on the whole, a generous brute, and he gave me a very good dinner. They know what a bottle of champagne is at the Reindeer, I can tell you; they can send you up something very creditable in the way of sparkling hock; and if you've a fancy for a bottle of old madeira, such as might rival Captain Cook for sea-voyages, don't be afraid to order it. We had some of that madeira with our fish. We didn't go into "sparkling" till the next course came in; and when we were tired of champagne, we went in for burgundy. I think it was some time in the fourth course that I was rather annoyed by the very peculiar conduct of a partridge. It began by his sliding about my plate, and persistently eluding my fork; he then dipped—yes, this malicious bird absolutely dipped down, plate and all, as if he were taking a sensation header, or going through a trap in the table-cloth. Next he dodged me—yes, dodged me from side to side; concealed himself behind the bread-sauce to avoid my knife; till on my making a final effort to pinion him with my fork, he took to himself wings and flew away—into Peck's shirt-front. I believe this gave rise to high words between Peck and me; but I know we afterwards shook hands; and there was something so really touching in our reconciliation that I wept. It was foolish of me to wipe my eyes upon my dinner-napkin, because I thereby introduced foreign particles in the way of crumbs and mustard into those optics, which injured my sight for the rest of the evening; but Peck said my conduct did equal honour to my head and my heart. I think it was in the course of a speech he said this; and I believe he paid me some very high compliments on my professional capacity and unblemished integrity. I felt grateful to him, though he pronounced it "*feshnl epcty*" and "*nbtlmshd*

egrity," and I didn't quite catch his meaning. This, of course, was after the cloth was removed, and we were taking our port and walnuts.

I don't know what brought Julia Maria (Mrs. Pettifer) so vividly to my recollection at this time, but the image of that injured woman did recur to me, and my feelings got the better of me. I had not acted well towards the wife of my bosom. I had not kept my promise; I had never written to her from Slitherem-on-the-Dwingey; partly because I had not been there, and partly because I did not believe there was any place of that name in the map of England.

How we came to think about the theatre, I don't know; perhaps it was because we had received a circular from the manager of that place of entertainment, perhaps it was the landlord who suggested the idea, perhaps it was the waiter; at any rate there was Peck standing with his back to the fireplace (O, what had he been doing to himself to make himself so indistinct and undulating?)—there was Peck, looking at his watch and saying that it was only half-past nine, and that we might as well go and look in at the theatre.

I don't know whether earthquakes are indigenous to Doncaster, but that town was certainly agitated by some convulsion of nature on this particular evening; and as the inhabitants appeared quite undisturbed by the phenomenon, I conclude that it was quite a common occurrence.

As to that man who told us the nearest way to the theatre, I hope he may come to an untimely end. Nearest way indeed! "Bear to your left down the street opposite, and then turn sharp round the first corner you come to, into a narrow lane." I did bear to my left, whereby I bore right into a horse's mouth, and received a torrent of abuse from a stable-boy riding the quadruped. The lad had been drinking—they will do it at these times!—so I forgave him. Then, as to turning sharp round the corner, did I not turn sharp round the corner, and did I not do the bridge of my nose a serious injury against the brickwork of the corner house? I have never quite understood how we ultimately made our way into the theatre; but I think it was side-ways, because I know something seemed to be taking me into the Market-place, which, as every body knows, is adjacent to that building. Peck took me into a box near the stage. Peck is a play-going man, quotes Shakespeare and Maddison Morton in his conversation. I take my family to see the pantomimes every Christmas; beyond that I am not a connoisseur. The play was *Hildebrand the Avenger, or the Spectre of the Mount*. Peck said it was trash; I thought it interesting. Mrs. Hildebrand was a widow, Hildebrand having been murdered at some remote period. She wore black-cotton velvet, ornamented with spiky embellishments in crochet-work. I knew it was cotton velvet, because it looked brown, and clung around her queenly form as she walked. She also wore pearls in her hair—the correct costume I daresay of widows in the time of Hildebrand the A. She was rather a big woman, and she might have been younger; but she was a model of conjugal propriety; and O,

didn't she annihilate Hildebrand's bad brother in yellow boots, when he revealed a guilty passion which he had chee-yerished—he pronounced it “chee-yerished”—for a space of some ten or twenty years! Now I should have enjoyed this dramatic entertainment very much,—for I felt a strong interest in the female Hildebrand, and I rather admired Yellow-boots, though he was a consummate villain, and had three supernumerary consummate villains, dressed in green baize and bluchers, always ready to carry out any scheme of a criminal description,—but there was a virtuous steward, who talked a great deal more than any body else, and who seemed to obtain all the applause. I don't know how he came to be connected with the partridge that had so aggravated me at dinner; but he—the virtuous steward—was nearly related to that malignant bird, and from the moment he spied me in the corner of the boxes, he made a dead-set at me. Yes, at me! The abominable and abusive language he used, I shall never forget. O, ah! he might pretend he meant it for Yellow-boots (the noble-er Count-er, as he called him); but when he said that “the man who didn't do so and so deserved the most ignominious treatment,” it was at me he levelled his denunciations, and I felt myself the focus of a whole houseful of indignant eyes. I told Peck of this fact, but he said he had not observed it. Peck never observes anything. I asked my partner if there was anything in my appearance calculated to attract the attention of that obnoxious steward; and P. said I did look rather pale. Suppose I did; was that the virtuous steward's business or mine, pray? and was I to ask *his* permission before I turned pale? I felt pale, and I rather fancied I looked interesting: that black ballet-girl with the eyes—I mean that ballet-girl with the black eyes—thought so, to judge by the way she stared at me. Well now, who do you suppose that virtuous steward was? The most experienced playgoer would have failed to fathom that secret. That virtuous steward was Hildebrand himself, who had been cleaning his own plate in his own butler's pantry, and waiting on his own wife, and depriving himself of all the comforts and privileges of his station for ten years; for the sake of keeping his eye on Yellow-boots, who had intended to murder him, but had foolishly intrusted the carrying out of the business to one of the supernumerary villains, who had evidently made a regular fiasco of it. Now, was not that idea charmingly original? I'm sure, when the virtuous steward threw off a white beard and a black cloak (how ever did he clean his plate or draw his corks in that cloak?), you might have heard a pin drop. I did distinctly hear the wire springs of the beard when it fell on the stage. And then there was such a burst of applause! And then poor Yellow-boots (he was a handsome young man, and would have been graceful if he had only been more settled in his ideas as to what he should do with his arms) was led away by his own minions, with a view to instantaneous execution. Perhaps he had been behindhand with their wages, for they really seemed glad to do it.

How ever it came about, I don't know; but all of a sudden we were behind the scenes. It was very dark, and there were a good many stairs, and somebody tumbled down, and I hurt myself. Peck knew the manager; and it was by some occult and back-stairs influence on the part of Peck that we had gained admittance to those sacred precincts. And there was Yellow-boots dressed in the costume of private life, smoking a meerschaum-pipe, and playing dominoes with the virtuous steward. My first impulse was to strangle the V.S., on account of those abusive remarks he had made about me; but Peck said I had better not; and then I found that I actually had a strong feeling of friendship for the V.S., and that I should respect and admire him to my dying day.

I think presently the manager wanted to turn me out, because I was something that began with a *d*, and disorderly. I knew that I was a model of gentlemanly propriety, and that the remark was the emanation of an envious mind; so I did not resent it. But Peck told the manager I was a jolly good fellow, and as quiet as a lamb when I was something that began with an *s*; and he invited the manager to come and sup with us at the Reindeer, which the manager consented to do.

They gave us a spatch-cock and curried lobster for supper; and this time we tried the sparkling moselle, quite a lady's wine, and not the sort of stuff to get into your head, especially if you laid a good foundation of old dry sherry and bitter beer, as I did. Wasn't that manager a glorious fellow too? And couldn't he sing a comic song too? And did not Peck and I join in the chorus? O, it was such a song! There were seven murders and nine ghosts in it; and really, though you were ready to expire with laughing while you heard it sung, it was not the sort of thing to think of afterwards when you found yourself alone in the dark.

After supper I proposed the manager, with all the honours; and the manager proposed Peck and me, with all the honours; and we drank the theatrical profession, out of compliment to the manager; and the manager proposed the law, out of compliment to Peck and me. Did he not make a witty speech about landsharks and bilge water? I believe it was extracted from the drama of *Black-eyed Susan*; but the manager passed it off as original. And then Peck returned thanks in a speech that was positively affecting; and then we drank the ladies—not that there were any present, but the fair sex in general; Peck said, the black-eyed ballet-girl in particular: but of course Peck is a single man. And then we went to the station.

Yes, we went to the station, though I don't particularly remember *how* we went. We had been to bed, of course, because it was six o'clock to-morrow morning, and there we were at the station. We might have had a cab, or we might have walked down and carried our carpet-bags ourselves—I can't say which; but I am ready to make an affidavit that it was six o'clock A.M., and there we were on the

platform. How that clerk we took our tickets from came to be my second cousin Mary Jane Thomas's husband, who died when I was a little boy, I don't know; but Mary Jane T.'s husband he was; and what's more, I was not in the least surprised to see him. Neither did I perceive anything incongruous in the conduct of the manager, though, on my turning round to wish him good-bye, he all at once grew so like my great aunt Storkins—Aunt Storkins was in trade once, and no Pettifer ever would notice anybody connected with trade—that I could have taken him for that elderly individual, if I had not known all the time that he was the manager as well.

Talk of a long journey! I conclude we went express, because we didn't stop anywhere; but, upon my honour, it seemed to me as if we began that journey in the period of the old red sandstone, and didn't reach our destination till the reign of Queen Victoria. *Eons* and *eons* seemed to pass away, and still that Wandering Jew of an express-train tore onward on its interminable course; and there was Peck sitting opposite me eating sandwiches the whole time. He wasn't always Peck, by the bye; sometimes he was Earl Russell; once he was the Emperor Nero, with a faint tinge of Mr. Alfred Tennyson; but there was an under-current of himself perceptible all the time.

How we came to pass Bagdad I don't know, unless it was through the stupidity of the engine-driver; but I remember somebody pointing to a city which seemed to be constructed of brick-and-mortar pepper-boxes and fish-sauce bottles with tall stoppers, and which Peck declared to be that ancient capital of the Saracenic Caliphs. In spite of everything, we reached London by half-past ten A.M.; and before I knew where I was, I found myself opposite my own door, No. 4 Montefiasco-villas, Denmark-hill.

When I say my own door, I am bound to add that at first I could hardly believe it to be my own door; for of all the stylish funerals I ever remembered seeing, the most stylish was just starting from No. 4 Montefiasco-villas. Such ponderous mutes! I knew the grief depicted in their rubicund faces could not have cost a trifle. Such feathers! I clung convulsively to the palings, for my thoughts reverted to Julia Maria. I remembered the guilty deception which had attended my departure from home, and I felt a conscience-stricken man.

Our parlour-maid Mary was standing at the garden-gate, gaping after the dismal cortège. I gasped out,

"Whose funeral? Not your mistress's?"

"No, sir; master's." Yes; she said it quite distinctly; "master's."

"Stop a minute," I said. "Collect yourself, Mary; you may have been availing yourself of a false key to the cellaret. Calm yourself, my good girl, and try back. Whose funeral?"

"Master's, sir. Fatal collision" (she said "klision") "on the Slitherem-on-the-Dwingey Railroad. Poor Mr. Pettifer brought home on a shutter!"

Slitherem-on-the-Dwingey. The girl had the name of that mysterious vicinity as pat as I have my A B C,—perhaps patter.

I was a little thrown off my moral equilibrium, but I was not going to give way; so I said,

“Don’t you know me, Mary?”

The girl stared at me with that vacuous expression peculiar to the lower classes.

“I never saw you before, sir, to my knowledge.”

This was too much. I strode past the girl, and up the gravel walk; but she stopped me, and said she didn’t think her mistress would see a stranger to-day. I used bad language; I said “Fiddlesticks’ ends!” And I went into the house.

She told me, this pert menial, to wipe my shoes on my own mat, that I might not injure my own carpet; and she looked at me, when she showed me into my own drawing-room, very much as if she thought I might mean to purloin some of my own nicknacks.

There was a newspaper on the table. I took it up mechanically. It was the *Slitherem-on-the-Dwingey Chronicle and Monday Morning Advertiser*. Good gracious me! this Slitherem-on-the-Dwingey—a place the very name of which I believed to be an emanation of my own brain, devised to pacify Mrs. Pettifer—seemed to have sprung into life by some mysterious agency, and to have become a flourishing city. The paper was full of advertisements, which plainly showed that Slitherem was a populous place. One column was marked with a long black streak, evidently the work of a soft quill-pen. I read that column. It was a detailed account of the fatal accident on the Dwingey Junction-line, between the stations of Slitherem and Slopeydruggon,—I never invented Slopeydruggon; that place was a frightful reality,—and of the subsequent death of Mr. Augustus Pettifer, solicitor, of Gray’s-inn, from injuries received therein.

Yes; there were the full particulars. The engine had run off the bank, and I, with several other passengers, had been precipitated into a field at some distance from the railroad, fearfully mutilated. Fearfully mutilated! Yes; that was the expression.

The door opened, and admitted Julia Maria Pettifer, in tears and a widow’s cap. In mourning for *me*! Things were really growing unpleasant. “Julia Maria!” I was about to exclaim; but I had scarcely enunciated the J before she interrupted me by burying her face in her pocket-handkerchief with a sound as of choking.

I felt very awkward; here was I expected to console my own wife for my own loss. After an embarrassing pause of some moments, Julia Maria emerged from behind the pocket-handkerchief. I don’t know what she had been doing, but her eyes were not at all red. I took a note of that.

“Ah, sir,” she said, “you perhaps were a friend of the dear departed.” Well, I flattered myself I was.

"But," I ejaculated, "Ju—"

She stopped me short at the Ju.

"In that case," she said, "I am sorry you did not arrive in time to attend the funeral. There was a vacant place in one of the carriages. Mr. Spivins had the toothache, and couldn't come."


O, Spivins had the toothache, had he! and it was too much trouble to attend my funeral! I took another note of Spivins's toothache—I had lent Spivins money.

"But as you were a friend of the dear departed, you may like to hear the will read," continued my wife. "It will be read in the dining-room at one o'clock. You would perhaps wish to be present; you may be interested." Having said which, she went back into the pocket-handkerchief and out of the room.

Now what did it all mean? That was the question I put to myself. What did it all mean? Could it be possible that any impostor had had the impertinence to be killed on the Dwingey Junction in my name, brought home to my house on a shutter, and had even carried his audacity so far as to go and be buried in my coffin in my family vault in Norwood-cemetery? I had been induced to purchase a family vault by Julia Maria, though really I had thought it a foolish investment, because of course if I died, somebody must bury me, or if they did not choose to go to that expense, it would be *their* look-out.

One thing may strike the reader as rather singular,—it struck me in that light myself,—namely, that I didn't explain myself; that I didn't say to Julia Maria, "Take off that widow's cap, and put that absurd handkerchief in your pocket, and draw the blinds up. For this is me; and I never went to Slitherem-on-the-Dwingey in my life, and consequently never came home on a shutter;" and so on. The fact is, that I was continually trying to say these very words, and I continually couldn't. This failure I attributed to two causes. First, the pain at my chest—O, such a pain—a weight, an oppression! I don't suppose any body ever had an Atlas omnibus, full inside and out, settled on their lungs; but only a person who had laboured under such a disease could form a just estimate of my sensations. Secondly, really, what with the parlour-maid's asseverations, Julia Maria's mourning, and the graphic account of the accident in the newspaper, I was in a manner beginning to believe in Slitherem-on-the-Dwingey. Suppose I had been killed? Suppose I had been brought home on a shutter, and didn't know it? There was an awful situation!

I pinched myself; it was painful. There was a fire in the grate; I laid hold of the bars; that was painful, very, and I believe I swore; but O, it was such a comfort to feel that I was mortal, that I could have blessed anybody for treading upon my pet corn.

It was a nice thing to be asked into my own dining-room to hear my own will read. There was Peck, in a suit of black, with ebony -heads for studs,—he always had a playful fancy,—sitting in

one of my morocco chairs at the top of my patent telescopic dining-table. He seemed to have forgotten all about Doncaster. I tried to recall it to his recollection, but a temporary paralysis of the vocal organs prevented me.

I suppose our dining-room must have been built on some newly-invented expanding principle, because it certainly was *not* as large as Exeter-hall when I left home; and in the matter of cubic feet it decidedly had the advantage of that edifice now.

It was really edifying to sit and hear how I had disposed of my property. There was a picture I rather prided myself upon—a Titian, a genuine Titian. The man I bought it from said it was, and of course he ought to know. Now, I had bequeathed this picture to Peck; Peck was not a bad fellow on the whole, and had stood my friend once or twice with Julia Maria after our Masonic dinner in Great Queen-street; and what do you think was Peck's remark on reading the passage in my will which made him possessor of this gem? "Poor fellow!" he said; "I appreciate his kind feeling; but he wouldn't have known a Reynolds from a Morland, and he always considered Michael Angelo and Buonarotti two distinct artists. The thing is the vilest daub that ever came out of Wardour-street." I tried to express my indignation, but another touch of paralysis was too much for me, and I took another note. Peck—daub—Wardour-street. I had learnt Beniowski's system of artificial memory, and I checked off those three heads on the fire-irons.

After the will was read, we all gathered round the fire, and we really became quite sociable. Mary the parlour-maid brought in a tray of decanters. Didn't the wine go to work!—my '48 port in particular. I don't know who it was that suggested smoking; but we all looked at each other; and presently some one—I think it was Peck—said there was a box of poor Pettifer's cheroots in the side-board drawer, and as it wasn't likely *he* would ever smoke them, we might as well blow a cloud. And so there was I, thanking Peck for one of my own cigars.

Our conversation was very melancholy at first; but presently we became a little more resigned; afterwards we grew quite cheerful; and at last, upon my word, we were almost uproarious. Peck told one of his best stories. I knew it by heart, and I laughed in the wrong place, and he scowled at me. I did it on purpose. Ha, ha! that vengeance at least was within my power.

It was very pleasant, too, to be taken by the button and told a good story about myself, the point of which was, that I had made a consummate fool of myself; and I think if Peck told me one such story, he told me six; and what's more, I laughed—yes, I actually laughed.

I think it was Peck proposed that as we'd had a very melancholy morning, we should run down to Greenwich and take a bit of dinner at the Crown and Sceptre—of course in a quiet way. "We shall find

plenty of hansoms at Camberwell-green," said Peck ; and off we went.

Now, when I say off we went, I mean to say off *they* went, for I did not go ; and yet I wanted to go, and yet I kept continually trying to go, and yet I continually seemed to be going ; but go I did not. Go I did not ; for the substantial macadam of Denmark-hill transformed itself all in a moment into the airy nothingness of the Goodwin-sands, and I felt myself suddenly going down, down, down into a fathomless gulf, like another Edgar Ravenswood.

Two broken wine-glasses, a plate of oyster and lobster shells, a play-bill, a candlestick, and my boots ! When I opened my eyes at the bottom of the fathomless gulf, these were the articles which met my bewildered gaze. They were on the table above my head ; my feet were in the boots, and I was lying on the floor of that apartment in the Reindeer in which Peck, the manager, and I had partaken of supper prior to my hearing my own will read. I was lying on my back on the floor, with my feet on the table above me ; and that is not a pleasant attitude in which to abandon oneself to slumber. I had one cork-screw, two balance-handle knives, and the neck of a champagne-bottle exactly under the small of my back. Those trifles did not add to the comfort of my position ; and when I tell you that my head was against a sharp corner of the fender, and that I found the heel of the manager's varnished boot planted upon my chest, you will not perhaps wonder that I had assisted at the reading of my own will.

Yes, it had been only a hideous dream, after all ; and there was the manager, asleep in an easy-chair, with my chest for a footstool, and looking quite aggravatingly comfortable. There was Peck too in another easy-chair, with a pocket-handkerchief over his face, looking still more aggravatingly comfortable. We had a splendid breakfast, plenty of soda-water and green tea, and started (it really was to-morrow) by the afternoon express-train ; and at eight o'clock in the evening I was seated before the social board, quaffing with Mrs. Pettifer the cup that cheers and does not do the other thing, in the sacred shelter of my own home.

I told her a good deal, if I did not tell her exactly all ; and never again, Julia Maria, never again ! No more Slitherem-on-the-Dwingeys, no more St. Leger stakes, no more Scavengers, no more Reindeers, and no more last wills and testaments. No ; we will go to Epsom in the spring-time of the coming year, and hob and nob out of our modest bottle of moselle, as a steady married couple should do.

But, dream or no dream, I mean to revenge myself upon Peck for his impertinence about that picture.

THE BASILISK

IT has been sometimes made a matter of regret that science, which is knowledge in its largest sense, should interfere with mythic lore, explaining one by one a number of time-cherished mysteries. In such regret the writer does not participate, well aware that science opens out the existence of more mysteries than she reveals. The mathematician knows full well that two lines may continually approach yet never meet; a condition even to him a mystery. The chemist knows that one and the same element may appear under the guise of two different forms—as charcoal and the diamond, as ordinary phosphorus and allotropic phosphorus, the former poisonous, the latter not: what a greater mystery? Let us not disparage science, then, that she explains certain things to our forefathers inexplicable; but rather feel grateful that her pure light, beaming upon the field of our limited faculties, reveals some fair gems of truth.

Chemistry and zoology have both had to do with revealing the mystery of Basilisks and Cockatrices—things which may be regarded as synonymous. This being so, it may not be uninteresting to recite how the revelation came about; to state by what train of reasoning and experiment ancient and mediæval lore has been robbed of one of its strangest monsters, and the world set at rest concerning what, if real, would be its direst enemy. Credence in the reality of Basilisk existence prevailed from periods of great antiquity down through mediæval ages almost to our own times. If the Basilisk and the Cockatrice be considered identical, then the reader need not be informed that mention of it occurs in the Bible. Greek and Roman naturalists frequently mention the Basilisk; indeed, the very name is Greek, and has reference to something of a kingly nature. According to the Greek and Roman belief, the Basilisk was a kingly serpent, chief amongst other serpents, one at the sound of whose hiss all other serpents crawled away. And well they might, were the kingly serpent's chief attribute real. The fable passed current that no living thing save one—the weasel—could gaze upon the Basilisk's eye and live. Besides this terrible faculty, it was believed that the Basilisk withered every living plant it might touch save one, the rue. The creature's very breath was reputed poisonous, even from afar off. I am not aware that any ancient writer described the Basilisk as winged, though in mediæval times the monster gained that attribute occasionally. From the dawn of Christianity onwards to a certain period, the Cockatrice type of presentment for the monster came to prevail; the creature being described and in some cases depicted as having some resemblance to a cock.

Invariably, however, the Basilisk, whether of serpent-like or cock-like type, was represented pictorially as the wearer of a kingly crown, emblematic of his regal attributes. Next came a further mutation of popular belief as regards this creature. No longer a serpent or a twelve-legged cock, the Basilisk came to be regarded as a sort of eminently poisonous toad. The habitat of the monster, too, had changed. Whereas in more ancient times the Basilisk had been wont to dwell in the full glare of African sun, basking upon desert sands that his fatal eye-glance had made a solitude, the Basilisk of latest times took up his abode in wells and mines and tombs, striking down with fell eye-glance people who might descend incautiously. Frequently, when reading mining experiences of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one will meet with circumstantial accounts of individuals killed by looking upon the eyes of a Basilisk; and invariably the accident has happened in the recesses of some cave, or the depths of some mine or well. So generally did the belief in Basilisk-eye poison prevail in England, at least up to the beginning of the last century, that a writer on natural philosophy of that date circumstantially accounts for it. Discussing the venom of poisons generally, it was his object to prove that their action depended on a mechanical function. He would have his readers believe that poisons acted through the laceration caused by the sharpness of their particles. Taking this as an established fact, he goes on to set forth how very sharp the particles of certain poisons may be; seeing the Basilisk-poison acts through a mere eye-glance. This author does not seem to have the remotest notion that the Basilisk might be a fabled creature merely. He writes with the same confidence of this animal that a naturalist now might write concerning the rattlesnake or cobra di capello. One point of testimony more our author notes, viz. that Basilisk-poison cannot act through spectacle-glasses.

After what has been stated concerning Basilisk attributes, it may seem extraordinary that Greek and Roman naturalists treat of Basilisk-hunting. Excitement of the chase is proverbially fascinating. In all times sportsmen have for amusement courted danger. The question is not so much whether sportsmen would now go out Basilisk-stalking were the creature really in existence, as how they would devise a way to kill him. One must needs see the prey to be brought down; but how to see the Basilisk, and not be oneself brought down? I am not quite certain whether the Basilisk was held to be harmless if viewed posteriorly; but even granting that to be so, the creature might turn his head. Then too be the fact remembered that his breath was poisonous. It does not seem easy, I repeat, to imagine a way of killing the Basilisk. The ancients represent Basilisk-stalking to have been conducted in the following manner:—People went out into the arid deserts where Basilisks did congregate, each person bearing a mirror. This was the only weapon. The hunters advanced, each holding the mirror

well before him. The sands were well explored; and if in the course of beating, a Basilisk should chance to gaze upon the mirror, back came his own glances reflected, and he was a dead Basilisk forthwith. This system was ingenious, but it must have been awfully dangerous and most abominably slow.

There is usually some foundation for every myth, and the Basilisk myth is no exception, whether we study its ancient serpent phase or its mediæval toad-like mutation. The part of the ancient tale which relates to the immunity of the weasel in presence of the king of serpents is reflected on,—the naturalist is reminded of the well-attested relations between the cobra di capello and a weasel-like animal called the mungoose. Not only is this little animal fearless in presence of the dreaded cobra, but no sooner does he meet with this serpent than he violently attacks it. If bitten, as sometimes happens, notwithstanding that the mungoose is wonderfully agile, he runs away, eats of a certain herb which acts as an antidote, then returning to the attack, does not desist from battle until the cobra lies dead. It is easy to perceive that the Greek and Roman accounts of the immunity of the weasel in presence of the Basilisk have reference to the well-attested fact in natural history just related.

Equally comprehensible is the basis on which the fable of the cave and mine and well-inhabiting mediæval and modern Basilisk is reared. Occasionally it happens now that persons who enter those places are struck down dead on the instant, as though they had swallowed a dose of prussic acid; but the occurrence is now referred to the breathing of some mephitic gas. The Grotto del Cane, near Naples, has long been celebrated for this reason; and the fabled effects of the upas tree of Java are only a mingling of two distorted facts. Certainly a very poisonous tree does grow in Java, and its name is upas. The sap only of that tree is poisonous, however, not the emanations of it. However, there does happen to exist in Java a certain deep excavation or valley, about half a mile across, and it is filled with heavy mephitic gas, probably sulphuretted hydrogen. No animal can enter that valley and live. Wherefore bones are strewn all about, and carcasses lie rotting. The accumulated mortality of ages has made this valley horrible to gaze upon. What we now call choke-damp in mines, especially coal-mines, is nothing else than an accumulation of carbonic acid gas. If breathed, it kills on the instant; and before pneumatic chemistry had come to be what it is, the fatal result would have been charged to the gaze of some Basilisk. Now, it so happens that toads will live in atmospheres so poisonous that man breathing them would die. Putting all these facts together, the Basilisk mystery stands revealed: fiction is deprived of a fable, and science has gained some facts.

RACHEL'S FOLLY

CHAPTER I.

RACHEL'S LOVERS.

THE sun was setting, shedding a blaze of yellow light over the great tossing sea, over the little village of Eastend, and over the brown cliffs running for many a mile along the sea-shore on either side of the village.

On the beach were groups of children playing, of girls talking and laughing together, and of men, who—some smoking, some sleeping among the boats and fishing-smacks drawn up above the tide-mark—were enjoying their day of rest after their own fashion.

There was no afternoon service at Eastend, so the villagers always turned out to talk and pass their Sunday afternoon socially on the shore. They were a quiet set of people—orderly, sober, industrious, regular in their attendance at church, hard-working, and, on the whole, prosperous.

Of course when I say this, I do not mean that they were remarkably good, or better than their neighbours, but that there were few openly vicious characters among them—few cases of disorderly conduct; and the work that was ready for their hands to do, they did willingly and well.

Some of them were fishermen; but most of them were employed in a large building standing a little away from the village—a rope-manufactory belonging to the squire of the place.

This gentleman was the brother of the clergyman; and perhaps it was owing to the interest they both took in their people, and to the care they bestowed on them, that the villagers of Eastend were such an orderly respectable set.

That particular evening of which I am writing, you might have seen among the group of girls sauntering about one so remarkable for her fresh beauty, that it was almost impossible not to notice her.

She was taller than any of her companions, and so finely made that her badly-fitting print-dress might disfigure but could not hide the perfect grace of her form. Thick gold-brown hair was coiled in masses round her head, and combed carefully away from the sweetest face that you could wish to see: a face which, with its blue eyes and rosy lips, its dimples and its smiles, looked more like one you would expect to see in a painter's study than among a group of fisher girls.

If you had watched her, you would have seen that amongst the whole set of men, women, and children, she seemed singled out for kind words and kind smiles. As she sat there lounging against a fishing-boat, now one and then the other came to chat a moment; and



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"UNDEN"



more than once some little child would leave its play to climb upon her lap and throw its arms round her neck, whilst the girls of her own age clustered round her, some sitting on the pebbly beach, some lounging about the boats, like bees round their queen.

A happier scene than Eastend beach could not be found; and it was no wonder that the girls saw with regret the great sun sink beneath the waves, and heard the village clock chime six.

In ten minutes after the first stroke the beach was clear, and the village street was crowded with the people going to church.

I am wrong when I say the beach was clear; behind the black boats there was still one figure lingering—it was the beautiful fisher girl, Rachel Kently.

She had let them all go one after another, finding some excuse to linger behind; and now as the beach was deserted by all but herself, she looked anxiously around her. "I wonder what they'll say when they miss me," she muttered to herself, as she began playing nervously with the pebbles. "And father too! poor father!"

Then she crept a little farther in among the fishing craft and laid down her beautiful head on the bare ground, that she might be quite hidden from the view of any one on the road above. The light faded, one or two stars came out, and still Rachel lay quietly under the shadow of the boats, only raising her head from her hard pillow to cast now and then an anxious glance at the sea.

At length the sound of a keel among the shingles broke the evening stillness, and then she looked up and called out clearly but gently, and without moving from her hiding-place, "Under the big boat, Mr. Sapping." At the sound of her voice a tall young man, dressed like a gentleman, jumped from the little skiff, drew it up as high on the shore as he could, and then he too crept among the vessels on the strand and was lost to view.

* * * * *

There was a long pier at the end of the village of Eastend; a long wooden pier, stretching half a mile, they said, into the sea; and at the little round-house at its foremost end lived a man of about thirty years of age, and of a character that, in his way, made him as remarkable as Rachel Kently among the Eastenders.

He had been a sailor in early youth, and was such a desperate, daring character, that when he left the service no one regretted it. At the same time he was a clever fellow—brave, and, in the service of a friend, capable of kind deeds, and even generous ones.

He lived a solitary life in the round-house, and passed his time easily enough in putting up the signal-lights and performing other duties in connection with the steamers constantly touching at the pier.

It was supposed that Tom Harding, or, as he was more usually called, "Big Tom" on account of his great size, was rich. His small house was comfortably furnished; he was always well dressed, and

he never seemed to deny himself any pleasure or comfort on account of money. You may be sure, therefore, that there was many a girl in Eastend who smiled pleasantly on Big Tom, in spite of his reputation for ferocity ; and many a mother who thought that little round-house might make a very cosy home for her daughter, in spite of its being exposed to wind and weather.

Big Tom said he wanted no wife. He declared that he hated women ; and he never could be persuaded to go to any of the village gatherings, till one day Rachel Kently happened to come to the end of the pier to meet her father. Then Tom's conduct suddenly altered. He began to make a habit of sauntering down to the North Star Inn, near where Sam Kently lived, every evening.

Sometimes he saw only Sam ; but sometimes Rachel would come to bring her father some message or fetch him home, and then Big Tom would walk a little way with her, and go home very happy.

By degrees he grew bolder. He took to calling on Sam at his queer old boat-house ; and at length he absolutely went to church in the evening with the father and daughter.

Meanwhile it was remarked that he was always buying something or other to make that comfortable little house at the end of the pier more comfortable still ; he had it painted freshly too, rather gaily, and made more weather-tight.

Altogether things looked very much as if Big Tom was thinking of taking home a wife, and that that wife was to be Rachel Kently. Still, whenever the neighbours joked the girl about him, and asked her when she was going to be mistress of the round-house, she only laughed it off, or blushed, and said she was too young for Big Tom's wife, and too timid to live in such an out-of-the-way place as the end of the long pier was.

The truth was, Big Tom had never yet asked her to marry him, and Rachel was not at all anxious that he should.

She was a timid girl, and it frightened her to think of marrying the fierce-looking enormous man, in spite of his soft manner to her : she had heard a great deal of his former life ; she had heard him swear too ; and once, never to be forgotten, she had seen him in one of his terrible fits of passion ; and the idea of going to live alone with such a man alarmed her. But she kept all these thoughts to herself. She knew her father would be only too glad to have Tom Harding as a son-in-law ; and from her babyhood she had been accustomed to give way to his will.

So she walked with Tom, listened to him, smiled at him, and allowed him to buy her little ornaments and deck her hair clumsily with the flowers he brought every day ; and yet at night she would kneel down and pray humbly that she might never be his wife.

CHAPTER II.

BIG TOM TO THE RESCUE.

ON that particular evening of which I am writing, Tom Harding had gone into church as usual, expecting to find Sam Kently and his daughter in their accustomed places. To his surprise, the old man came hobbling in a few minutes later alone.

Sam himself seemed astonished not to see his daughter anywhere about. He looked around anxiously, and then sat down, evidently expecting her soon to appear; for every time the door opened he turned to see who came in.

But the prayers and lessons were over, and no Rachel; the last hymn was sung, and still no Rachel.

Big Tom's patience was at an end. He stooped quietly for his hat whilst the congregation were kneeling over the prayer before the sermon, and when people rose up from their knees his place was empty. He did not quite know what he feared, or why he should find any thing to be anxious about, in Rachel's absence. Still his heart misgave him that there was something wrong in it.

It was very quiet out of doors. One or two sailors lounging before the North Star, and one or two old women sitting at their cottage-doors, were the only human beings visible.

Tom felt glad that it was dusk. He could pass them more easily without being forced to stop and talk. And he didn't want to talk and tell them he had come out of church because Rachel Kently was not there. However, one of them stood just in his path, and he couldn't help himself.

"Holloa, Harding; why, you are out early, mate," exclaimed the man, puffing out a cloud of smoke. "Where are you steering to now?"

Tom walked on a pace or two.

"O, ahead," he answered, pointing seaward in the direction of the pier.

"Wind's rising; sing you a few sea-songs to-night, I'm thinking," said the other. And then, as Tom moved on again, grunting assent, he called after him: "I say, mate, if you fall in with young Mr. Sapping, just shout to him to stick to the land to-night."

"Mr. Sapping!" answered Big Tom, stopping short. "Is he in these parts?"

"Down somewhere yonder. I saw him sailing alongside o' the pier an hour ago in that bit o' a skiff; and now she's lying nigh the boats on the beach. Hail him as you pass, mate."

Big Tom turned round slowly, and looked eagerly in the direction pointed out to him.

"Ay, ay," he said gruffly, moving off; and then he muttered still more gruffly to himself: "And what does *he* want o' these parts?"

He had a suspicion—a suspicion that made his fierce face look fiercer

than ever—as he walked along the quiet dusky road in the direction of Sam Kently's home.

Sam's dwelling-place was an odd mixture of boat and hut. The front looked as if it was made of a black barge, planked in and set up endways; and the back was a kind of hut, well tarred to make it waterproof. It was not so uncomfortable within as you might have supposed. Rachel's natty fingers had beautified it in various ways; and the large arm-chair drawn close up to the little fire-place, with the supper-table already laid beside it, looked very inviting, as Tom gently pushed open the door and peeped in.

"Rachel," he called; "Rachel, are you there?" And then, no one answering, he walked in.

Tom's eyes were sharp, and perhaps that night anxiety made them sharper. As he looked round, he noticed that Rachel's bonnet, usually hanging against the wall, was gone, and that the supper-table had only one knife and fork on it, only one plate. Sam's pipe was lying on the mantel-shelf ready filled, and beside it stood the black bottle from which Sam took his dram before going to bed. Rachel's fingers had been carefully busy; but why was all this prepared so much earlier than usual?

As he was pondering this, he heard steps come softly over the pebbles. The door was pushed a little ajar, and then Rachel's sweet voice said,

"In five minutes. I shall only take my cloak and a small bundle."

"Make haste then, darling," returned another voice, which Tom recognised as Mr. Sapping's; "and whilst you get your things, I'll just run down and get that rope from Hempson. Be as quick as you can; they'll be out of church in ten minutes."

Big Tom's bronzed face turned ashy pale as he listened; dreadful passion and fierce grief were at his heart; but he restrained himself, and, as softly as he could, pushed open the door of Sam's sleeping closet and crept in, as Rachel entered the front room. Through the little pane of glass that lighted the closet he could watch her movements. And he did watch, his face growing each moment more angry and fierce-looking.

Rachel went to work hastily, collecting a few things, first from one drawer and then another; and then she made them up into a small tight packet. She was very pale, and breathed quickly and hard, like one trying to keep down sobs; but she never hesitated. Then she threw on her cloak, and tied on her bonnet; and giving one hasty glance round on the old familiar room, muttered, "God forgive me!" and went out.

"Heartless, deceitful little jade!" Tom growled to himself; "but"—and he swore a dreadful oath—"she shall learn Tom Harding is not to be played with or cheated by a silly girl."

And then he went as softly as he could after her out of the house

on to the beach. She was walking quickly in the direction of the boat; and in the twilight he could just see her figure standing solitarily by the edge of the sea, waiting for the man Tom already hated as his greatest enemy on earth.

Big Tom strode like a giant over the shingles. In two minutes he had reached the skiff, run it down to the very edge of the water, and then, before Rachel was quite aware of who had come upon her, had seized her in his strong arms and thrown her into the boat. The next moment the sail was up, and they were dancing over the waves at a rate that soon made a long distance between them and the shore.

Rachel gave a long frightened cry as she saw *who* had discovered her, and then sank down in the stern of the boat and covered up her face in her shawl.

CHAPTER III.

TWO VOWS.

If she had been on the land, she would have screamed and cried; but what good would it do alone on the great sea with that fierce angry man? She was quite in his power, out of the reach of all human aid, for no one could hear her at that distance from shore; and, in spite of the rising wind, he was standing out to sea.

All the horrible stories of jealousy and revenge, of jilted lovers murdering their false loves and killing themselves too, passed through her brain, and terrified her almost to madness. She dared not uncover her eyes and look at his fierce face; she dared not move; she dared not even pray; for, after all, might not this be God's punishment on her for thinking of deserting her old father? And then the idea of dying with this sin fresh upon her, unrepented of, even unconfessed before her Saviour, made death more awful still.

The wind blew chilly over her, the boat danced and tossed about like a nutshell upon the waves, and the spray dashed over her in continual showers; and still he kept her before the wind, flying out towards the sea at a tremendous speed.

Death, thought the terrified girl, must be very near, very, very near. And then she put her two cold hands together and tried to say the prayer her mother had taught her before she died; but her lips would not move; the sound of waters rushing, rushing everywhere filled her ears, and she fell down on her face, and remembered no more.

When she woke up again to life she was lying on a soft rug before a warm fire in a queer-shaped, low-ceilinged room. The wind still seemed whistling quite close to her, and the waves dashing and plashing round her; but for all that she felt safe. She tried to remember where she could be, and how she had got there; and as she lifted up her head and caught sight of the figure sitting beside her, she guessed well enough.

Big Tom was beside her, with his elbows resting on his knees and his chin on his hands, and he was looking at her with his dark angry eyes. She was still in his power, and now in that solitary round-house at the end of the pier. She put up her hands to her eyes not to see him, and she cried out,

"O, Tom, Tom, don't look like that at me! What have you brought me here for?"

"Because you shouldn't bring shame on your old father and on me," Tom answered, never taking his fierce eyes away from her face. "You know you were as good as promised to me; and d'ye think because Mr. Sapping's a gentleman, I'm going to let him take what's mine?"

"I never promised to marry you," Rachel answered passionately. "I love Mr. Sapping, and go with him I will; he will marry me; he vowed to heaven he would."

"Listen here, Rachel," Tom said in a low terrible voice, and grasping her arm till she could have screamed with the pain: "I, Big Tom Harding, as never made an oath he didn't keep to, swear you shall not go with Mr. Sapping, ay, nor marry him neither; for unless you give me your solemn word to marry me to-morrow, I'll lock you in here, and you shall never come out till I come to let you out with *red* hands, Rachel."

The girl gave a short frightened cry.

"No one can hear you, and I am master here. The boat's below: shall I go back after him? Say the word, girl!"

She gave a frightened look up at him, and then dropped her head on to the rug with a low miserable sob. And then, whilst she lay with her face covered up from his sight, all that she had heard of his desperate character, his fierce-heartedness, kept crowding into her poor bewildered mind. She quite believed that he would keep his oath. And then, whilst she was thinking all this, Big Tom suddenly rose from his chair and moved towards the door.

Rachel sprang to her feet.

"Tom," she screamed, running across the room in great terror, and planting her back against the door, "stop! Listen; do what you like to me, but don't touch him. Heaven forbid that through me *he* should come to harm. I will marry you; I will be your wife. But for God's sake don't come to me with his blood upon your hands!"

Tom drew back, looking at her all the time.

"You will marry me, and love him!" he said a little sullenly.

"If I marry you, I will be a faithful wife," she answered indignantly.

Tom went back to his chair and was silent for a moment; then suddenly he looked up at her white beautiful face again.

"Rachel," he exclaimed, "if I take you home to your father quietly, and forget what has happened to-night, will you swear to me, after you are my wife, never to see Mr. Sapping again?"

She hesitated a moment. Never see Mr. Sapping again!—never! She meant to make Tom a faithful wife; but it seemed hard never to see that faithful, devoted Harry Sapping again.

“Well,” Tom said gruffly, “are you afraid to promise that?”

“I swear,” she answered faintly,—“I swear never to see Mr. Sapping again.”

And after that Tom wrapped her in his own large cloak and opened the door, and took her out on to the pier; and then he drew her hand through his arm, and they walked silently along the half-mile of wooden way, with the waves dashing wildly below them and the wind whistling round them.

* * * * *

And that was how Tom and Rachel plighted their troth.

CHAPTER IV.

TAKING THINGS QUIETLY.

ABOUT two miles from Eastend, or say from the sea-shore, stood a handsome house, known by the name of Eastend-place.

In the breakfast-room of this house the morning following that Sunday of which I was writing in the last chapter, two gentlemen and a young lady were seated at the breakfast-table.

The elder of the two gentlemen was tall, gray-haired, and grave-looking. The younger was very handsome, and you could see by his countenance of an unusually gay temper; although that morning he seemed a little gloomy.

The young lady was pretty, and elegantly dressed.

“I thought you were off to London, Harry,” said the elder gentleman; “what has made you change your mind?”

“O, I don’t know,” replied Mr. Harry carelessly; “perhaps I shall go to-night.”

Just then a servant brought in a letter and handed it to Mr. Harry. “The man from the pier brought it, sir,” he said; “Big Tom he’s called about here.”

Mr. Harry coloured a little as he took it; but he turned pale after he had read it, and he slipped it into his pocket quickly.

“Why, what an odd-looking letter!” exclaimed his quick-eyed cousin Lizzie. “What is it about, Harry?”

“O, only some fishing-tackle I was going to buy,” answered Mr. Harry, not hesitating to tell an untruth now, any more than he had last night to poor simple Rachel. But he got up from the table; and when he was alone in the park, he read that letter over again. It began:

“MR. HENRY SAPPING,

“I know of your wicked intention towards Rachel Kently. But when you have this, she will be my wife; and I warn you it will be a bad day for you that you speak your wicked words to her again. I

have taken an oath about it, and Tom Harding never yet forgot his oath. Look to yourself, and keep out of both our ways.

“TOM HARDING.”

He was annoyed at being threatened by a man of Tom's rank; and he was also annoyed at hearing that pretty Rachel had escaped him and was married. It put him quite out of temper for the whole of the morning; and he wandered about the park undecided whether to go and ask Tom what he meant by threatening him, the rich Mr. Sapping's son and heir, or to go off to London and say nothing to any one about the affair.

After a good deal of meditation, he determined on the latter course; and, in justice to young Sapping, I must say that it was not because he feared even that fierce Tom Harding. The truth was, Mr. Harry wanted his father to pay rather a large bill; and he knew that if his “scrape,” as he called it, came to Mr. Sapping's ear, he was very certain to refuse his son the money and put him out of form for some time.

So, whilst poor Rachel was weeping to herself, and thinking how miserable Harry must be to have lost her, and how unfaithful he must think her, Mr. Harry was reckoning up his bills, and riding in a first-class carriage to London, and trusting most devoutly his “scrape” would not get talked of in the village, and so reach his father's ear. He thought very little about Rachel. And then in the evening he went to a ball, and met another beautiful girl, who quite drove the little fisher maiden out of his head.

CHAPTER V.

BROKEN FAITH.

QUIET Eastend was quite startled when one day it became known that sweet Rachel Kently was actually married to Tom Harding.

People could not believe it at first; and it was only on Mr. Sapping the clergyman assuring them that he himself had joined their hands early one morning in the solitary little church, that they were satisfied that daring Big Tom had not carried off his pretty prize by force.

Almost every inhabitant of Eastend found some excuse to go to the end of the long pier after that; and there, sure enough, all eyes saw another face and figure than Tom's flitting about the curious little round-house.

At first it was rather a sad frightened face, and apt to hide itself behind the muslin blinds; but as time went on, it grew brighter and bolder, and by degrees, when some old companion loitered up to the pier-head, the door of the round-house would be opened gently, and pretty Mrs. Harding would step out for a few minutes' chat.

And I can assure you, in spite of its odd position, in spite of the manner in which she had been forced into becoming its mistress, Rachel found the little round-house a very comfortable home.

Big Tom might be fierce to other people, but to his young wife he was kinder and fonder a thousand times than even handsome merry Harry Sapping had been.

Nothing that she wished or asked for did he deny her—nothing that he could do for her, or cause to be done for her happiness, did he neglect; and though he was a little rough and a little queer, Rachel could find nothing to complain of, or to make her really regret that she had been forced to become his wife.

Tom was generous too, as men should be to their weaker wives. He never alluded to Rachel's folly, never mentioned the name of Harry Sapping. Perhaps it was because he kept his own oaths so firmly, whether they were good or bad, that made him trust his wife would do the same; at any rate he never questioned her about it. It seemed as if he had entirely forgotten that dreadful Sunday night, and as if he had forgotten that such a person as Mr. Harry Sapping was in existence.

It was the wisest course Tom could have pursued. Had he taunted Rachel with her sin, she was still vain and foolish enough to have upbraided him in return for all he had forced her to give up, and which in her heart she still kept repining over.

The poor child had believed Mr. Sapping faithfully when he promised to marry her; and in marrying Tom Harding she fancied herself giving up a gentleman for a husband, and a grand house with carriage and servants, and fine clothes and jewels, and all the rest that her imagination pictured Mr. Sapping's wife would have. She never for an instant dreamt that instead of depriving her of wealth and happiness, Tom had rescued her from sin and shame.

So, at first, she took her husband's kindness for a wish to make up to her for what she had lost; and though she was a little sullen and sore, she allowed herself to be coaxed by it, till at length she gradually began to like it, and then to care a little about that great rough Tom himself.

It took a long time to do all this—a great many summer evenings, when she would sit on the wooden steps of the pier, sewing and singing, or listening to the plash of the great clear green waves below, while Tom climbed about, hoisting the signals, or fishing, or cleaning his boat, but always finding time to come and talk and sit by her; a great many autumn and winter nights, when even beside the cosy fire the roar of the sea and the whistle of the winds would make her glad to come and nestle down at his feet, and bury her head in that old rug; a great many days and nights, days and nights, till last year seemed a long while ago.

And the love for her husband came on so gradually, that I think she scarcely knew herself that it had come at all, till one day she held a little child in her weak arms, and then, as she murmured its father's name over it, she burst into tears, and asked God to forgive her.

To forgive her her hard-heartedness, I suppose; and after that, when

she was strong and about the house again, it seemed as if a new spirit was in her, she was so loving and gentle.

Well for her had it been if those pleasant days had continued—if Heaven had mercifully spared her further temptation; and well also had it been for her, when she knelt down beside her baby's bed night and morning, if, when she prayed for God's blessing on those dear to her, she had prayed for strength for herself—if, when thanking God for His goodness in giving her so much love, she had besought Him to strengthen her to deserve and preserve it faithfully.

Rachel Harding was a careful loving mother, a gentle obedient wife; she read her Bible, said her prayers, went regularly to church, and, as far as appearances went, was at peace with all friends and neighbours; and if you had told her she was not a religious young woman, she would have been very much startled; but it was this very self-confidence that prevented her being really religious, really zealous in the service of her God.

* * * * *

It was a pleasant early June evening; the sunshine was still flooding land and sea, and dancing round and about the odd little house at the pier-head, till every pane in the small windows shone like burnished gold.

Down below swelled and flowed the clear green water, flashing under the sunlight every now and then like diamonds, but passing under the shadow of the pier calmly and darkly.

In the distance two or three white sails stood out to sea, and near at hand a few dark fishing-boats floated lazily on the calm gently swelling waves.

Big Tom had gone down the coast on some business; and so Rachel, with her baby in her arms, was sitting on the pier-steps hushing it to sleep, and watching for the signal of his return to go in and set the supper-table.

The sunlight now and then crept in through some crevice in the wood-work, and fell on her sweet face and brown hair, and then a prettier picture than the young mother you might have hunted Eastend for and not found.

There she sat, now singing a low sweet song to her baby, now listening to the low sweet song of the waves, evil thoughts as far from her as the sky is from the earth, when the noise of something rustling and plashing gently through the water made her look up hurriedly, fancying perhaps her husband had come upon her unawares; and she was about to call out, "Tom, is that you?" when a small boat, a tiny skiff, rounded the head of the pier. A crimson colour rushed into her face; she knew that skiff well; there was no occasion to look down into the face that was gazing up at her from under that straw hat, to find out to whom it belonged. Her heart beat with great throbs under the baby's sleeping head.

"Your oath, Rachel!" whispered conscience; "get up and go away into the house; he will not dare to follow you there."

"He has not come to see me," she muttered to herself; "he does not even look at me. Of course I sha'n't speak to him."

And so the foolish girl bent her head over her baby, and thought, as she did not look at the tempter, she was doing no harm.

"Rachel!" called out Harry Sapping; "how are you, Rachel? Surely you will speak to me?"

She did not reply, but bent her head lower over the child.

"Surely, Rachel, you don't think I'm such a scoundrel that you are afraid to speak to me. Mayn't I come up?" called out Harry Sapping again, and pushing his hat off so that she might see his kind, handsome, pleading face.

"Don't, sir," Rachel answered in a frightened voice; "I swore never to speak to you. Go away; please go away!"

"But there is no harm, Rachel, you silly child; I only want to have a look at you, and hear if you are happy with that great ruffian of yours. Let me come up?"

Mr. Sapping put his foot on the first step; but at that moment the large dark sail, which Rachel's quick eye could distinguish whilst it was still a speck in the horizon, hove in view. She started to her feet. "Go," she exclaimed; "or it will be dreadful for us both." And then she sprang up the steps, dashed into the house, and flung herself panting in her chair.

For a few minutes she listened, in an agony of fear and anxiety, for the sound of Mr. Sapping's departure. The water splashed and rushed among the wood-work, but her well-accustomed ear could clearly distinguish that from the motion of a boat.

"Surely Harry would not be so mad as to wait Tom's return!"

She clutched the baby till it woke and began to cry, in her anxiety; and then a voice called out, "To-morrow, Rachel; good-bye!" and then the welcome deep and regular rushing of the waters announced that he was gone.

Tom's boat was a slow sailer, while Mr. Sapping's skiff skimmed the waves like a sea-bird. Now that he was once off, she had no fear; so she laid the baby on the bed and began setting the supper, and tried all the while to look natural, and be glad that her husband was so near at hand.

But when she looked at herself in the glass, she saw that she was deadly pale; and her poor fingers trembled so, that she could scarcely set the table.

Would her husband notice her looks? Had he seen Mr. Sapping's skiff? Would he be angry? Should she tell him?

No; she trembled at the bare thought—she dared not. What would he think of her breaking her oath? He would never forgive her—never trust her again.

And then she kept murmuring, "God forgive me! God forgive me!" But it never entered her foolish, frightened head to kneel down and say, "Father, teach me what to do! Help me to do right!"

And so there she wandered about the room in a kind of giddy fear and trembling, undecided what to do, and scarcely knowing how far she had done wrong, till the sound of Tom's heavy foot ascending the steps, and his voice calling her, recalled her senses a little. At any rate, she must meet him as if nothing had happened.

The first glimpse of Tom's great bearded face told her he had not seen Mr. Sapping's boat. He was in high good humour; he had met an old sailor friend, and had done his day's work, and was ready for a good supper and a quiet pipe.

And then he was so hungry, and busy with the nicely-broiled steak and the foaming beer, that he could only find time to praise his young wife's cookery as she sat there opposite him, pretending to eat her supper.

And then (fortunately, Rachel thought) it grew dark, and she was forced to go and put the baby to bed; and when she returned Tom had fallen asleep over his pipe, quite worn out with his day's work.

It was only when they were getting to bed that, as Big Tom turned to help her to close the shutter, he noticed something amiss in her usually bright face.

"What ails you, Rachel?" he asked kindly; "your eyes look wild as a scared gull's; what ails you, my girl?"

For an instant her conscience whispered, "Tell him all, Rachel—be a truthful, faithful wife!" But her silly fear came again. "There's no harm done; and I shall never wrong him," it urged. So she only turned away and said, "The baby has been fretful, and I'm tired."

CHAPTER VI.

STORM-CLOUDS.

THE next morning was sunny and pleasant. In spite of herself, as Rachel stood on the pier-head, watching Tom prepare his boat for another trip down the coast, her spirits rose. "There is no harm done," she said to herself; "and I could not help it; besides, I *did* send him away." And so she comforted herself; and then she kissed her husband, and watched him off, and tried to believe she was as good a wife as ever.

But she wasn't so happy as she had been yesterday morning.

And as she sat sewing, whilst the baby slept, somehow she didn't like to think about Tom; so she thought of Harry Sapping.

What a pleasant voice he had! what a handsome face! He was not married yet—and he had not forgotten her!

Such thoughts were the most dangerous she could have; and yet she would have been terribly angry had you told her they might lead to her not being a faithful wife. She trusted herself entirely.

About noon she locked up the house, and took her baby with her to the village. She wanted to do some shopping, and also to see her father. The truth was she was restless, and found the house lonely.

She found plenty of amusement in Eastend ; plenty of kind words for herself, and admiration for the baby ; but somehow she was not satisfied or pleased, so she went home earlier than usual ; and then with trembling steps and a heart that kept telling her she was tampering with her happiness, she went to her accustomed seat on the pier-steps. What was she going to do ?

"Nothing," she would have replied ; "she always sat there ; besides—"

But whenever a sail came in sight, her heart bounded and her colour came ; and she sang no song that evening—she was listening much too intently.

Poor foolish Rachel !

And the time seemed long till that skiff came in sight ; and then she bent over her baby, but she did not move away, nor even call out when without any word or question, Mr. Sapping fastened his boat to the pier, and then jumped on to the steps.

"My sweet Rachel," he exclaimed, as he took her hand and sat down beside her, "it seems years since we met ; and how changed you are !"

"Changed !" she said in an uneasy tone. "Ah, I am older, you know ; and married life changes one."

"I don't mean in looks," Mr. Sapping went on ; "you are as pretty as ever, my darling ; it is to me in your manner you are changed. You don't care for me any longer, I see."

Rachel remembered that she was a wedded wife—for she was foolish not wicked—and answered gravely, "No, sir ; because I am Tom's wife now, and it would be sinful."

Harry Sapping laughed gaily ; and Rachel blushed and felt grieved, and wished herself away in the round-house.

"Is that all ?" asked Harry ; "then you don't hate me for myself ?" And he again took her hand ; and then, as he noticed the wedding-ring on it, he laughed again. "My dearest little prude, and how does the ruffian use you ?"

"Very well. Please, sir, don't talk of him like that," Rachel said with dignity.

"Well, I won't, if you don't like it. I only want to have a little talk with you. You needn't be afraid of me, Rachel, or look so cross."

And so they talked on for half an hour, till the sunlight, playing on the sea and on the little house above them, began to fade. There was not much wrong in any thing they said, or any thing they did : there would have been no harm at all had not Rachel been a wedded wife, and sworn never to speak to Harry Sapping again. And when at length he rose to go, they parted very quietly. Rachel drew back firmly from his offered kiss ; and he for once was a little abashed at her

modest dignity, and pressed her hand almost respectfully as he got into his boat. Then he pushed off, and she stood watching him.

"No harm," she whispered to herself over and over again, as she mounted the pier-steps slowly and reëntered the house. "I have shown him how steady and firm I am. There is no harm, I am sure."

And then she took out a small pair of earrings that he had brought her, and held them out to catch the light; and she again began to dream of all the pretty things which would have been hers had Harry Sapping married her.

And these thoughts hardened her conscience. She began to care less about deceiving Tom, and to think he had used her hardly in forcing her to become his honest wife. And she laid the baby on her bed, and began to fasten in the new glittering earrings before the looking-glass, and to wonder if Mr. Sapping did really think her as pretty as ever.

Long as this takes to write, it all happened in a very few minutes; so few, that when heavy steps coming along the pier in the direction of the land startled her, she quite forgot that those tell-tale earrings were still in her ears, in a dreadful fear that her husband was coming, and that Mr. Sapping's skiff must still be in sight.

She caught up the baby in an instant, and went into the front room just as Tom opened the door.

"Her heart throbbed with fear; but she managed to toss up the baby with trembling arms, and exclaim, "Why, Tom, how early you're home!"

"Not earlier than yesterday," he replied, in a voice that sounded strange to her anxious ear. "Isn't supper ready?"

"In a moment," she said, glad to bustle away.

He had not kissed her as usual; he hadn't noticed the baby; and his eyes had a fierce light in them, although he spoke quietly.

The young wife's heart sank within her. "Something wrong," she thought to herself, as she began laying the cloth. "He has seen the skiff; will he question me? what shall I say?"

"The truth; tell the truth, and all may yet be well," whispered conscience.

Big Tom stood leaning against the mantel-shelf, and Rachel busied herself frying the bacon beside him. She would have given worlds for a kind word, even for a word on any ordinary subject. But he took no notice of her; he did not even try to hurry her, as he often did when hungry.

I am not sure but that a single kiss from him in that moment would have induced her to tell him the whole truth; for all the hard thoughts had passed away, and just then no person on earth seemed so precious as her great strong husband.

"Are you tired, Tom?" she at length ventured to ask gently.

"I was," he answered gruffly; "but I've forgot all about that."

"What are you thinking of?" she again ventured to say in a trembling voice.

"Never mind; get the supper," he replied sternly; and then he went away out on to the pier.

"He has seen Harry," she thought to herself. "What will become of me? Why didn't he get in a rage like he used? Is any thing—"

And then that dreadful threat of his, on the night she had attempted to go away with Mr. Sapping, flashed through her memory, and she could not help crying out in her terror.

Big Tom came in immediately, and then it was all on the tip of her tongue to tell him out, and beg his forgiveness; but he looked so fierce and grim, her coward heart shrank again.

"The bacon-fat burned me," she said in excuse. "Come to supper, will you, Tom?"

And then they both sat opposite to each other, and began to eat silently; neither of them looking up.

In vain the baby crowed and laughed; neither father nor mother had smiles to give it. Rachel only drew it to her bosom, and tried to nurse it.

At length Tom looked up, and as he pushed his plate from him, said in his gruffest tone, "Where have you been to-day, Rachel?"

"To the village," she answered. "I wanted to buy some tea and sugar, and to see father: father's been ailing lately, you know, Tom." She spoke in a low gentle tone, very different from his.

"Has any one been to see you to-day?" Tom went on.

"From the village, do you mean?" his wife asked, feeling sick at heart; not wishing to tell a lie, and not daring to tell the truth.

"Any one, I say; any one from anywhere," Tom cried, thumping the table with his great fist. "Can't you answer, girl?"

And then poor foolish Rachel coloured up and answered, "No; I don't know why you are so cross and unkind, Tom;" and she got up from the table and went out of the room.

Big Tom looked after her with a puzzled expression. "I'd give worlds to know the truth," he muttered; "for, by the heaven above me, I'd keep my oath;" and then he too got up and took his pipe to smoke by himself at the end of the pier.

It was the first evening they had spent apart since their marriage.

CHAPTER VII.

A FATAL MEETING.

WHEN Tom went in, Rachel was in bed, and apparently asleep; and early the next morning Tom turned out, and was busy with his boat; so that husband and wife didn't speak to each other until breakfast.

Rachel glanced anxiously at him as he sat down, to see if the fierce

gloominess had worn off at all ; but he still looked grim ; and he made no remark to her, as he was always in the habit of doing, when he came in.

" You won't be away so long to-day, will you ?" she said, as he rose to go out again.

" How do you know ?" he replied sharply.

Rachel coloured, and said, of course she didn't *know* any thing ; only she hoped he wouldn't be.

The truth was, Harry Sapping had told her his father, who employed Tom on those expeditions, intended to go himself that day, and that therefore her husband would return about three or four o'clock ; in consequence of which he (Mr. Sapping) proposed paying his visit about noon, to be sure of Tom's being absent.

Rachel followed him as usual to the pier-steps with the baby in her arms ; then rather tremblingly she held up the child to receive a farewell kiss, and afterwards put up her own cheek.

As she did so the sun glittered on something half hidden in her hair, and caught her husband's eye, and he put out his great fingers and took hold of those shining earrings. Alas for Rachel ! she had forgotten them.

In a moment his eyes were gleaming fiercer than ever, his dark face growing livid with anger.

" Where did you get these ? Who gave you them ?" he asked in a voice terrible with suppressed passion.

Rachel's fear made her bold for an instant.

" I've had them a long time," she replied in a firm voice ; " a very long time."

He raised his hand—no, he didn't strike her to his feet, but he pointed to the door of the house, and said in a tone that struck a cold icy fear to her heart, " That is a lie ! go in, and leave the house again if you dare !"

And she did not dare disobey ; and he came and locked the door after her, and put the key in his pocket.

I cannot describe her thoughts or her dreadful fears, as she sat for a moment pale as a corpse on the chair into which she had first dropped.

Then she got up almost frantic, and shouted for her husband. " Come back, only come back, and I will tell you the holy truth, as I hope for God's pardon. Come back, come back !"

But in vain she cried, in vain she called—no voice answered her—no step sounded near ; the dash of the waves below and the sighing of the breeze were the only breaks to the dreadful stillness.

Had Tom gone ? or was he hidden near, watching ready to pounce on Harry Sapping when he came, like a wild beast on its prey ?

And then she tormented herself with wondering what would happen. Would Tom keep his dreadful oath ? If he did, it would be all her fault ; an awful sin would be done on account of her cowardice and

deceit. And worse, Harry's blood would be upon her head; and still worse—but she dared not go on, she could only hide her eyes and moan, moan till even the noise she made was dreadful to her own ear.

No thought of prayer entered her head; she felt as if it would be a mockery to pray whilst a dreadful wickedness was enacting through her folly. So she sat moaning there, with dry parched lips and haggard eyes, and not even hearing the cry of the baby on her lap.

How the time passed she knew not; it seemed ages since she had been sitting there; and yet the clock ticking in the corner showed only a quarter to twelve.

In a quarter of an hour more Harry Sapping ought to come—what would happen then? She listened intently for the least sound. No steamers touched at the pier before half an hour after noon. No one would come to the round-house before then; and half an hour was an age to perform a crime. She dreaded the sound of a boat.

But as the clock told ten minutes to twelve, that sound came—came quite close; and then, to her terror, she heard steps on the pier-stairs, and a voice calling gently, "Rachel, Rachel!"

She held her breath to listen for some signs of her husband's being near, but none came; and Harry Sapping kept on calling her by name. Then she took courage, and crept to the window looking out over the sea, and opened it.

"Go away," she called out in a voice that sounded sharp and harsh; "for God's sake go away! Tom has discovered us, and he is fearfully angry; your life is in danger!"

"What nonsense, child! Tom's not such a ruffian," laughed Harry. "Come out, or let me in; there's a darling."

"For God's sake," she cried again, "go, go!" And as she spoke a dark shadow came across from the other side of the pier. She screamed, and hid her eyes. O, heaven, what was to follow? But when she looked again the little boat was dancing over the waves at a little distance, with Harry Sapping in it; and then the shadow of Tom's great figure turned the corner away from her sight, and she heard his heavy steps coming down the pier in the direction of the land.

Harry Sapping was still safe; but Tom was pursuing him.

Rachel said, "Thank God!" and the words seemed to bring something to her remembrance; and she flung herself on her knees in the middle of the floor and prayed—prayed as she never in all her life had prayed before—that God would prevent this sin, would help her to prevent this terrible evil.

And it seemed to calm her. She put on her bonnet and shawl after that, and putting the baby within reach, she opened the window and managed to crawl out, and then, with her child in her arms, she ran down the pier after her husband.

A brave resolve was in the young wife's heart. She would prevent her husband from doing this sin, at any risk, even if her own life should have to be sacrificed.

So on she ran, only stopping at the end of the pier to inquire which way her husband had gone.

But no one seemed to know. Tom Harding passed so often, that no one marked his coming and going. She ran on, looking wildly about; but every thing was quiet and peaceful, and there was no sign of either her husband or Mr. Sapping.

Which way should she go? Should she tell any one her great fear, and ask for help?

She looked round, and whilst she was hesitating she noticed that small skiff lying on the beach empty.

"He has gone home. Tom has followed him," she cried almost aloud; and then, swift as a young fawn, in spite of her burden and the hot sunshine, she set off running along the dusty road towards Eastend-place.

Heedless of passers-by, or of their wondering looks, the poor frightened girl kept up her headlong speed till she reached the lodge-gates of the great Place: and then, as she burst in upon the gate-keeper, she sank with a terrible cry upon the ground.

Fortunately the woman knew her, and in an instant she had taken the baby from her arms, and was vainly trying to understand the question Rachel was sobbing out as she lay gasping on the floor.

"Tom—my husband?" at length she managed to say audibly.

"Ay, child; he's come and gone," answered the woman. "Did ye want him?"

"Gone!" cried the poor wife, springing up with new life; "gone, did you say? Where, O, where? Which way? Tell me quick, for the sake of Mr. Sapping—for the sake of us all."

"Why, what is the matter? the heat's sent ye mad," answered the gatekeeper, looking with some fright into Rachel's flushed face. "Sit ye down quiet, Mrs. Harding, whilst I fetch Miss Lizzie; she's outside;" and without waiting a reply, the woman ran out, and in a moment almost returned with a kind, pretty-looking young lady.

"I am sorry—" she began, taking Rachel's hand; but Rachel clutched hold of her like a mad woman.

"Mr. Harry!" she exclaimed. "O, miss, tell me where he is. My husband's after him, miss, and there'll be awful wickedness done if he finds him; and it's all my fault. Can't you help me, miss? For the love of heaven, help me!"

The young lady turned deadly pale. "Your husband was at the Pier half an hour ago, inquiring for my cousin Harry. What does he want with him?"

"He's sworn a dreadful oath against him," Rachel almost shrieked. "Which way did he go?" and catching up her baby, she turned towards the shore.

Miss Sapping followed her. "I told him Harry was going to London by the next train," she exclaimed. "Let us go to the railway station. O heaven! help us!"

And then Rachel sprang off, and Lizzie following her, away both the girls ran, tearing over the fields and along the lanes towards the station.

A train was on the point of starting for Ranford, the junction where all passengers from Eastend changed for London; and they had only just time to get their tickets, and make a hurried inquiry if Tom or Mr. Sapping had been seen about the station.

One guard alone had noticed a tall man, whom he thought was Tom Harding, rush in just in time to catch the train that had started about half an hour ago for Ranford; but no one had seen Mr. Harry Sapping, and Harry Sapping was well known to every person about the station.

Lizzie Sapping, though pale as death, was more calm and collected than the poor wretched young wife, and she gave orders that should Mr. Harry Sapping appear and take a ticket for London, he should be desired to return immediately to Eastend-place; and she scribbled a few words on a piece of paper, and desired that it should be given to him or sent to the great house. And then she took her seat by Rachel, and tried to comfort her and herself with the hope that they might reach Tom before Harry left Eastend, and that, after all, all might yet be well.

And poor Rachel shrank back in the corner of the carriage, and thought that the train would never start; and though her bloodshot eyes stared about her, she was like one in a trance, and saw nothing.

At length the engine began to make some signs of departure; the great bell rang, and just then there were shouts—a well-known voice called out, "Ho, there, guard; open the door!" and then those bloodshot eyes of Rachel's did see a figure fly past the carriage, and knew that it was Mr. Harry Sepping.

The guard clung on their carriage, and called in, "I couldn't help it, miss; he's off; you must stop him at the junction;" and then they steamed slowly out of the station, and there they all were rushing into the very clutches of fierce Tom Harding.

It was very terrible, very terrible to both the women; but Lizzie Sapping had no guilty conscience to add to her fears. Rachel's tortured her like a fiend.

On they went through the green fields and lanes, with the sunshine pouring down on them, and the pleasant summer air blowing in at the open windows; what a sight to look upon with their weary eyes!—On they went, nearer and nearer to what they dared not think of.

Past the banks—the shining river—the green woods—the grazing sheep—the white cottages—the old churches—on, on, till there, as they stretched out their heads, they could see in the distance the great town of Ranford, with its large station and its complication of iron rails.

"Ranford Junction—change for London," rang in their ears; and then, as the train stopped, they sprang out. The moment was come!

But Ranford was a large place, and many persons got out there, not only to change for different trains, but for the place itself; and as the two girls stood looking around them they saw crowds of people, but neither of those they sought. They heard, however, from one of the porters that Tom Harding had arrived by the preceding train, and had not been seen to leave the station or to go on by any other. Evidently he intended awaiting there the arrival of Harry Sapping; so their only course was now either to get Harry off before they could meet, or be ready to prevent any mischief should they see each other.

Miss Sapping was busy hunting about for her cousin; and she was just about to procure the assistance of the station-master, when Mr. Sapping came leisurely along the platform, looking about him as indifferently as if no such person as Tom Harding was in existence. When, however, he saw his cousin's pale face, beside the still more agonised one of Rachel, he started, and came hastily towards them.

"There is something terribly wrong, I fear," Miss Sapping began, with white lips; "I cannot gather from this poor girl the whole story, but you, Harry, will probably understand it. Tom Harding is after you with deadly threats of vengeance."

"O, Mr. Sapping," Rachel murmured, vainly endeavouring to say more through her parched lips,—"O, Mr. Sapping, go—" but she interrupted herself with a violent scream, as she pointed in the opposite direction.

Climbing down the platform, crossing the rails, with his terrible face turned towards them, came Big Tom Harding. On he came, looking neither to the right nor to the left; and then Harry Sapping, with sudden fury at the hated sight of him, shook off his cousin's hand, and heedless of the shouts of the guards, jumped on to the rails and went with clenched fists to meet him.

What they said no one knew—what they did no one saw; for cries of terror and shouts of danger from all parts rang through the station; and a few yards off came thundering in the express train on its direct route to Bournemouth.

A wild scream—a scream that made itself heard for miles and rang above all those cries and shouts—followed; a woman's figure flew rather than ran across those terrible rails; and then came an awful minute, during which carriage after carriage flew by, and no eye dares look what that dark object was under the wheels, and every ear still rang with a death-shriek!

And when it was gone, there stood a big white-faced man and a woman clinging to him, and a few yards from them lay a crushed form and a pool of blood! Harry Sapping was killed—and Rachel's daring had saved her husband!

* * * * *

And after that, for days and days Rachel's life was a blank to her—a blank during which that dreadful story spread through the country, and there was no tongue to tell whether the dead man had really deserved Tom Harding's bitter hatred, or whether his frightful end had overtaken him in the commission of a boyish folly.

Tom told out the story of his anger boldly enough; he avowed that he was pursuing Mr. Sapping with the intention of punishing him; but no question ever drew from him if he really intended to take the life that had been so awfully destroyed under his eyes.

That the accident was entirely Mr. Sapping's fault there were plenty of witnesses to prove, poor weeping Lizzie amongst them; and so Tom was allowed to go home to the miserable little house, where Rachel lay raving and shouting to him to save Harry Sapping! And as he listened, though he hated that name, he could not help wishing with a shudder that his had been the life taken, and Mr. Sapping's spared.

What was life to him now, with that terrible memory to haunt him, and his trust in his young wife gone? And in his despair the fierce man hated the light of day, and hated to wake up to it.

But as the darkest hour is before the dawn, so those dark days heralded a more peaceful life. In his misery his heart became softened. One morning, by Rachel's side, he groaned forth a prayer—a prayer that for years had never passed his lips; and it brought back his boyhood and childhood—times when his conscience had no heavy weights on it or black shadows, and, in spite of himself, he laid his head on his pale wife's pillow and burst into tears.

And then as reason gradually came back to Rachel, she murmured in his ear her confession of the past, praying him so humbly to forgive her weak deceit, that, in his softened humour, he dared not deny her the pardon he felt he needed so terribly for his own life.

It took months and months to restore that little home to its former peacefulness; but peace came at length, and of a more enduring kind; for the husband and wife had learnt to trust each other and distrust themselves, and both of them remembered that had it not been for their sin, the home of good Mr. Sapping had not been sonless, and that to God's mercy alone could they look for forgiveness for the past.

A GIRL—A HORSE—A TREE.

I.

A GIRL, a Horse, a Tree—
No more—and yet to me
 A picture unforgotten evermore ;
Burnt suddenly into this brain of mine
As sunlight stamps on vaporous iodine
 The far wild restless sea, the silent shore.

II.

By the blue winding Trent
That elm magnificent
 Spread heavy branches through the summer air ;
Fast fluttering shadows of its foliage fell
Upon a fairy form I knew too well,
 Haughtily sitting her brown Arab mare.

III.

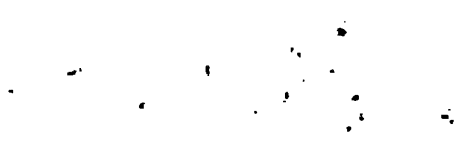
I spoke—I know not why.
Was it the summer sky,
 The Trent's delicious reach of azure light,
The mellow cadences of amorous birds,
Opening the fount of foolish loving words?
 Who knows? She passed for ever from my sight.

IV.

Ah, her brown startled eyes—
Her haughty lip's surprise—
 Her tremulous little hand—her fluttered breast !
That picture strangely bitter, strangely sweet,
By the great river in the summer heat,
 Must dwell upon my brain, till death brings rest.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.









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